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So-he is a thief

BLUEY GREY

A
SPORT ABROAD

A RACING ROMANCE

BY
W. N. WILLIS

A crowned caprice is god of this world,
On his stony breast are his white wings furled :
No ear to listen, no eye to see,
No heart to feel for a man has he :
But his pitiless arm is swift to smite,
And his mute lips utter one word of might,
'Mid the clash of gentler souls and rougher,
Wrong must thou do, or wrong must suffer.
Then grant O dumb, blind god at least that we
Rather the sufferer than the doer be !
GRANT ALLEN.

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Illustrations by H. C. MORLEY.

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BLUEY GREY.

CHAPTER I.—THE THIEF-CATCHER'S STORY.

Immortal gods, I crave no pelf ;
I pray for no man but myself :
Grant I may never prove so fond.
To trust man on his oath or bond ;
Or a keeper with my freedom ;
Or my friends, if I should need 'em.

Timon of Athens.

THE first breath of beautiful Spring had wafted over fair Australia, driving frowning Winter into the dark abyss of Time's oblivious bosom.

Spring had been ushered in—with its joyful sunshine, its flowers, its birds, its light, and heavenly warmth—giving joy and life to the poorest heart.

With Spring comes annually the great Australian Carnival—the Melbourne Cup—which gladdens or saddens the hearts of British sports living in peace and quietude in that great hemisphere fringed by the Southern Sea and guarded, godlike, by the Southern Cross—Australia!

Yes; that year's "Cup" was over! And the hundred thousand persons who witnessed the great battle which gave the "Cup" to the game little mare, Acracia, were left to count their gains or losses.

Yes; it was "Acracia's year." It was a great sight to see the little daughter of Cerise and Blue—

only a pony—coming through her big field, whilst one hundred thousand voices exclaimed: "What is that coming on the outside?" "What is that now challenging the favourite?" "What's in the lead?"

Before answers could be vouchsafed, the game little mare had cut the big cracks of the field down, and caught the judge's eye—A WINNER!—a 20 to 1 chance!

Thus we were discussing the Melbourne Cup of Acracia's year, as we lolled lazily in the comfortable arm-chairs in the off-parlour at Scott's Hotel, Melbourne, a central spot where sports do mostly congregate. None of the eight or ten young bloods of our party—who were now counting the cost of the day's sport—had backed the little mare. Yet few grudged her her triumph, as she raced so gamely, yet looked so small, and was hardly ever in the betting.

Whilst we lolled there, on this beautiful Spring evening, the conversation kept to the topic of racing, and the last dozen winners of the "Cup" received a foremost place in the chatter.

One of the party, a Bendigo magnate, casually asked a friend sitting near him if he remembered the part played by "Bluey Grey" in Carbine's year.

"Bluey Grey?" echoed another. "Why, that is the bright youth who fooled the police when Carbine won the cup. He was a pure smartie."

"Yes," laughed another young chap from a sheep farm up Ballarat way. Yes; there were no flies on Bluey."

"Whatever has become of that chap, Bluey Grey?" was the general inquiry. Each looked at the other—none seemed to know. At that moment a shadow darkened the doorway.

"Ah," said a youth, knocking out the ashes of his pipe, "Here's a friend who knows all about Bluey Grey. Eh, Mack?"

All eyes were turned to the door.

A tall, dark, well-set man, past the middle life, and well on the way to human sundown, entered the room, casting a furtive glance at the occupants. He appeared to be looking for someone.

"Now, come on, Mack! Come and have a drink. No? Well, have a cigar. Come on, we want you to tell us something about that jockey-trainer, bright boy, Bluey Grey, the Uncaught Thief! You must know all about him."

The dark man shook his head, smiled, and said: "No, I'll not stop. I have long since given up the business of catching thieves. I've had my innings; let the younger men have a go at that precarious business. Thief catching is not the easy game it was—the fraternity are now too expert."

Mack was an ex-Melbourne thief-catcher, a great diplomatist in the Australian Thief-catching Corporation. The public were wont to call him the "Prince of Thief-catchers." Even the thieves respected Mack, and still respect him, because, to use their own phraseology, "He was above dirt, when he *did* catch them."

"Oh, come on, and sit down," said a gay young spark, a sheep farmer from Albany. "I suppose you knew, in your 'catching' days, Bluey Grey, the Uncaught Thief?"

The subject seemed to charm the once great thief-catcher. His dark eyes sparkled, and his face became animated. He automatically drew his chair close to the fireplace, and gazed at the dying embers in the grate, saying, as though

soliloquising to himself: "Yes, I knew Bluey Grey—none better. He was the smartest youth, the greatest thief, and the most expert tale-teller this country ever produced—aye! and was the greatest girl-catcher I ever met. The women folk dearly loved Bluey—his "strengthy," manly ways and bright disposition won their hearts, which he broke *ad lib.* amongst the best of society's dames. The story of Bluey's entanglements with and submerging of one refined, cultured, and good girl is pathetic in the extreme. Yes, I will tell you the story—you be prepared to pity the girl, who loved him, though she knew he was a thief."

"Born in the social gutter, and, so to speak, dragged up by the hair of his head, uneducated in everything but vice, unaided, alone—for Bluey never had a party—surrounded always by police battalions and police suspicions—he surmounted every obstacle, any one of which would have brought the cleverest thief, excepting Bluey, I have ever known to the ground. Yes, Bluey was a real clever head—he was master of his game.

"When I first met Bluey Grey," continued the one-time thief-catcher—the fascination of recounting the devious doings of Bluey apparently warming him to the subject—"it was in Carbine's year. Yes; it was when the grand Champion won the Melbourne Cup. As you all know, few persons thought Carbine could land the Cup that year, and negotiate ten-stone-five (10-5).

Warming more and more to the subject, Mack proceeded: "The bookmakers had laid barrels of money against him, and were still pouring the coin out in large amounts, as though Carbine had

already lost the race. Certainly, there were rumours floating about that all was not well.

The stable was uneasy, and the greatest precautions were taken to ensure Carbine getting a fair go in the race. A good deal of wild talk went the rounds about doping, bumping, stuffing, putting the horse over the rails, and such-like.

I must confess I did not like the way the book-makers were laying against Carbine. The matter was foremost in my mind as I stood outside Menzie's Hotel one evening looking for a noted thief the police wanted badly.

As I stood there Bluey Grey approached me. He was a happy, good-looking, good-tempered, laughing-faced youth, although an expert thief. He had a magnetism about him that made one forget his profession and laugh heartily at his jokes—he was full of jokes and merry tales.

He told me of the job that was about to be sprung on Carbine. He knew the "mob" that would try to put up the joke. They were no friends of his, and if he could turn an honest penny I could command his services.

He struck me as being the very man to act under instructions. I believed he would go straight.

We had a drink, and Bluey and I went for a stroll. I instructed him what to do, how to do it, and where to see me from time to time. His fee was to be £25, in gold, the moment Carbine left the saddling paddock for the starting post.

Bluey grasped my hand most affectionately, and told me to trust *my* life to him. He had now but one object in life—and that was to gain the confidence of his persecutors, the police, and do some good for himself.

He saw me from time to time during the eight days' interval, and at each interview he had a graphic tale to tell as to the fine work he was putting in to prevent any mishap to Carbine.

I believed him—his tales were so circumstantial and seemed so feasible.

At last the eventful day—Carbine's Melbourne Cup Day—arrived. It was a beautiful day, and the attendance at Flemington Course was a record.

The World and his Wife were there, making holiday. The course was in splendid order, and the green lawns, dotted with beds of spring roses and other early blossoms, caught the eye at every point, and flooded the senses with all that was beautiful, healthful, and gladdening.

All eyes were on Carbine. The excitement had been gathering force faster and faster through the first three or four events of the day, as if making ready to burst forth into one great shout of triumph if Carbine could but win the Cup, with ten-stone-five (10-5) on his back.

The first bell sounded, "Get Ready!" The second, "Saddle up!" The third and last bell, "Go to the Post."

A hundred thousand people almost walked over each other, scrambling for places of vantage to get one glimpse of old Carbine as he came out of the birdcage paddock on to the beautiful lawn-like course at Flemington.

I shall never forget the cheer that went up as the old horse drew past the multitude, preparatory to his preliminary canter, with pricked ears, an intelligent look, and a firm, solid trot, which, being interpreted, said: "Sports, I hope you're on me. You'll have a run for your money!"

I was watching the old horse finish his preliminary canter and then trot back to take his place at the starting post, when someone tapped me on the shoulder, saying: "I beg pardon."

It was Bluey Grey.

"Carbine is gone to the post," he said. "What about my brass?"

I smiled, and said: "Here's your money, in gold. Put the lot on Carbine. His owner tells me he can't lose. Get in, now."

Bluey hesitated a moment. I turned my head to say one word to a brother detective. Turning again immediately I said: "Bluey, will you take my advice, and put the 25 on Carbine?"

In an instant he put the five-and-twenty sovereigns back into my hand, saying: "You put them on for me, with this bookmaker, and give me the ticket. They might pinch me if they saw me with so much money."

I returned his pleasant smile, took the money, and, handing it to a bookmaker I knew well, said: "125 to 25 Carbine."

The bookmaker tipped the sovereigns, uncounted, into his bag, wrote the ticket, and screeched for more customers at bargain rates.

I gave Bluey the ticket. He smiled again, and said: "I'll never forget you, Boss; never, as long as I live. I have now gained the confidence of the police, and made something for myself."

"They're off! They're off!" yelled a hundred thousand voices, and a hundred thousand echoes re-echoed, "They're off! They're off!"

All eyes were turned to the start, all conversation was suspended, expectancy was on tiptoe. As the horses rounded the turn out of the straight, to

negotiate the distance, the leaders took a pull—the rearguard started to settle down, and the outside contingent drew in to settle in more advantageous places—on they raced.

Carbine lay in a nice position close to the rails—not on the rails—about the fifth. He had just got his legs and stride. Something in black now moved up, and took a place by the old horse. Many spectators feared this would mean a bump.

Thus they galloped on until they neared the tramway sheds. Carbine had lost a little ground, and a great “Oh!” came from the crowd. As the cry died away an odd voice exclaimed: “He’s beaten! He falls back! The pace is a cracker.”

The field were now in a bunch. On they came, closing up the ranks, closer and closer, as the field swung into the straight. The yelling of the different names of horses was emphatic and loud. The bookmakers were yelling with the rest. Amidst their cries could be heard, “He will never see it!” “He has no chance!” “The black on the rails wins!” “What is that chestnut on the outside?” “Where is Carbine?” “Has the earth swallowed him?” “Two to one you can’t find him!”

Eventually the yells and screams were drowned by one great shout which broke forth through the beautiful Spring air as a little below the distance Carbine showed his head in front.

The whips were out and the spurs were in. The race for a crown in the Sporting Empire was at its height.

Carbine continued to forge ahead to well within the distance line, gamely gaining ground by inches until he had almost shaken off all opponents.

On, on came the champion—now within a few

yards of the winning post. Still he had not *won*. One great effort—one mighty rush—he headed his opponent—one stride more—he stretched his head. as though by instinct—caught the judge's eye—and won on the post by a neck. Carbine had WON.

No tongue could describe the excitement and the cheers that greeted the winner.

We strolled off to see the horse unsaddled, and to watch his trainer indulge the champion in a bottle of champagne. Then, after a drink or two, we sauntered about—and so another “Melbourne Cup” was over.

About an hour after—the programme for the day was then nearly finished—I strolled into the ring to see the price offered for an outsider, when, to my amazement, the bookmaker, with whom I had put up Bluey's five-and-twenty sovereigns, accosted me, and said: “Do you know that the 25 sovereigns you gave me, 125 to 25 Carbine, were crook?”

“Crook!” I exclaimed.

“Yes,” he answered bluntly, “Frauds!”

“Frauds!” I echoed. “Fraudulent sovereigns?”

“Yes,” he replied, smiling. “They were home-made. They were almost warm from the coining plant in the kitchen.”

“But,” I asked, amazed, “how do you know?”

“Well,” he replied, “they felt light when I handled them, and my clerk drew my attention to the different appearance of them when they were in the bag. Now I find there are only 25 of them, and I concluded you put the joke on me.”

“Did you pay the ticket?” I queried.

“We don't know one ticket from another,” was the reply. “Each ticket says so much to so much,

and the holder of that ticket is entitled to be paid. I have paid all my tickets."

"Well," I thought, "this is one of Bluey Grey's tricks on me." I remembered the smile on his bright face when he remarked to me that his only desire was to get the confidence of the police, and to make something for himself. He evidently took my good sovereigns, rang in the changes on me by giving me the home-made article, and then used me as a means to distribute his kitchen-made.

It was serious, but a good joke. I couldn't help smiling. It was just that kind of joke that no thief, barring Bluey Grey, would think of putting up on a policeman.

My business now commenced to look for Bluey Grey. But, although every port in Australia was watched, and every policeman had a full description of the gentleman with his home-made sovereigns, not a trace of him could be found. It seemed as though the ground had opened and swallowed him up. He certainly never left Australia by any of the watched ports.

"What became of him?" asked one of the party.

"Ah! that you shall see," said the thief-catcher, and he resumed his story thus:

Some years after I was in London, sipping coffee in a coffee-house.

It was there I next fell in with Bluey Grey. Not the old Bluey—the knight of the pitchfork and stable-broom brigade, with the healthful odours of his occupation on him. No; but a new Bluey, a regenerated Bluey, dressed in the height of fashion, with the latest West-End-cut clothes, bell-topper hat, choke-you-while-you-wait collar, bang-tail coat, patent French boots, protected by lavender gaiters,

with gloves to match their tints, while a large diamond pin with pearl pendant adorned his French necktie. The transformation was complete. The old Bluey had given place to an up-to-date Bluey. Yet he was still "Bluey Grey!"

Our eyes met. I could have sworn that he knew me. Yet the rascal affected to be oblivious of my identity. But I was not out to be bluffed. Bluey's resplendent get-up was worthy of an explanation.

I manœuvred a little—and got it. Bluey was too expert in his profession to attempt to temporise with me. I soon had him sitting opposite me, and eyed him keenly as I volleyed my questions on his steel batteries of secrecy.

He speedily capitulated, smiled, and said: "Of course, Mack, I know you. I'd pick your 'physog' out of all the choice angels in heaven, and spot you as a good sort anywhere."

Recriminations were useless. I had left my job as catcher. So, mutual explanations followed. Bluey ordered a bottle of wine, and over a friendly glass I promised to forget the home-made sovereigns and give him absolution for his sins, conditionally on Bluey informing me how he got out of Australia and of the games he had been up to since he left that fair land of wheat, wool, and wealth.

"Oh! bless your heart," said Bluey, polishing off his second glass, "I left Australia by the back door. Fools alone leave by the front door. After dropping you in for the home-made sovereigns, and collecting from the Jew bookmaker, I bade a loving farewell to Sydney and Melbourne, and travelled per boot, per cart, per train, and per horse, into the

interior of Central Australia, where my identity was soon lost amongst the gum trees and 'Mulga wires' on the banks of the Warrago."

"In Queensland," he proceeded, "I got a job with a mob of cattle going to Landsborough Downs, and Louisa Downs, out past the Clon Currie copper mines, and nearing on to Normanton. Once at Normanton, which is the farthest Northern port in Australia, I took ship for India. Since then I have been busy and merry, but now my luck seems dead out."

"Yes," added Bluey, "lately my life has been a bit stormy. My nerves are gone. Now I hate fuss and bother, and can't stand worry."

"How about a rest cure?" I suggested. "Your occupation has become exhausting because it is not punctuated by the various rest cures. How is the air at Dartmoor? They say Portland's not damp. How would a quiet sojourn there improve your nerves? You'd find the company congenial, and the diet strictly vegetarian!"

Smiling, Bluey said: "Oh! I simply ask for peace and quietness. I only wish to be left alone." He stared me full in the face. A cunning smile played momentarily in the corners of his well-formed lips, whilst his keen eyes searched mine, asking if I had caught his joke.

I agreed that all thieves prayed for peace, and that the object of their lives was to be left alone.

Bluey smiled again. "This is the land of mugs," he said. "Sydney is the land of heads."

Then, drawing nearer to me, he continued, with an assumed confidential air: "This is the Promised Land that Moses missed. Canaan was not in it, compared with this country, all the talk of milk

and honey, notwithstanding! Yes, my friend!" Bluey went on, "this is the land Moses missed by a head, but his descendants are making up for it, for, by George! they are here in millions. The King of the Jews lives and reigns here, and a jolly good King he is, too. Things are so good here that you do not need to keep awake to make money. You can make it while you sleep. Then it will compound itself, and treble that again—while you wait—or sleep!"

Bluey concluded by chuckling the merry chuckle of a man who is on good terms with himself, and wishes to impress his solitary listener.

*

CHAPTER II.—BLUEY IN CALCUTTA.

SMILING again, Bluey proceeded. Once in Calcutta--

Where never a beggar need despair,
And ev'ry rogue has a chance.

—once there, the game was easy. The climatic influences affect the police out East, they are always asleep. They wake up occasionally to take meals, holding with the philosopher who said, "'Tis dangerous between one's meals to work or fret." For my part, I considered it healthy to work, and I mighty soon got to work on the mugs.

My introductions and recommendations, and a faked-up newspaper cutting or two, gained for me a position with a Parsee gentlemen who owned some decent racehorses. I so impressed him with my fakes and fictions that I became the second jockey in a first-class stable, and made first-class use of my time.

In India jockeys don't do much work or "hard labour." They ride about twice a week, and hardly ever go near a stable. I had, therefore, ample time to follow my own profession. I made quite a pile, in a little time, by "tip-slinging," taking a hand occasionally in the "two-up" school (tossing the penny), and spending a night now and then with the card-sharper brigade.

Also, I fell in with a couple of smarty bookmakers. Not that this would be an unusual experience in India, or anywhere else. The difficulty is to *miss* smarties, in the game of heads-I-win-tails-you-lose.

One of the two was from Australia, the other came from England. I fraternised with them, and we were soon on good terms.

The smarty from England introduced me to a ringer-in they called Snider. My eye! What a chap that Snider was! He could enter and race a "ring-tail" with any man at the game. He would ring a horse in a race, and, in case of trouble, ring himself out, in record time.

The Australian penciller invited me to use my ability in the direction of stopping the favourite for a big race. The horse was sheltered in the stable whose owner sheltered me. It was a pretty big "joint." The horse was a red-hot pot. The public got their hair cut to get in early on him (back him). He was watched by the stable connections night and day; in fact, he was never left, which was worrying. But, "where there's a will there's a way."

I had been offered £250 to settle the "Pride of the Parsee," and had made up my mind that when I had finished the contract the horse's chances of winning would be finished. Try as I would, however, I could not get a "look in" at the horse at all. My luck was clean out; and I believe that if I had thrown a five-pound note into the air it would have come down a summons—such was my luck! I was dead on my own "pat" (alone in his work).

The morning of the race arrived, and we boys had to ride our string of horses to the course. The boss trainer gave me a leg-up on an outsider, and the other boys were placed on their respective mounts. The owner's son—a smart youth of about 15—was legged up on to the favourite. The first jockey of the stable was too uppish to ride; so he went to the course per coach. The trainer started

us all off with the injunction to be careful of the horses, and a hint that he would follow us in a moment or two.

The time was drawing nigh, and once we were on the course I was a "goner," for the horse would then be watched. However, the opportunity came, as it always does to those who know how to make the opportunity. As we were passing the blacksmith's shop I suggested to the boss's son that we should swap horses for a few moments in order that I might get the blacksmith to look at the favourite's feet. Of course, I told the kid that I was doing this in obedience to his father's wishes.

The youngster fell into the trap, with a flop. He jumped off the favourite, with an alacrity that was a tribute to the trust he had in me, and got on my horse. I took the favourite into the shop, and, as the blacksmith was getting ready for the races, I, quick as lightning, opened the horse's mouth, and, jamming my hand into it, well pinched and rubbed the throat outside, underneath each of the jaws. Then plump into his digestion bag went the dope ball that had been prepared for him, and which I had kept in my pocket for two days, waiting my chance. "*He has got the ball: we have got the race,*" thought I.

I soon caught up the other stable lads, and then watched the workings of the doped favourite.

My bookmaker friends, being satisfied that the horse was doped, quickly got to work on the field, laying tons of money against him.

Crossing the Calcutta course lawn, I met the English Johnny bookmaker. He was refusing to lay the favourite at any price.

I called him aside, and—knowing him to be a “head” at the game, having graduated to his present position through nearly every gaol in England—I told him that I could stiffen the favourite for a trifle. He could hardly believe his senses or his ears. I then showed him one of the dope balls I had in my pocket—it being the second one, for fear the first would miscarry—and asked him to come round to the horse’s box and see me drying him.

No mistake! It was a real staggerer to this fly dead-meat-merchant bookmaker. I can see his face now, with the vision of millions impressed on it.

He fell to the business at once, and came round a few minutes after to the box where I had my coat off drying the doped horse, which was sweating profusely, not to say foaming at the mouth. One look satisfied the bookmaker that I was in a position to do my work. I followed him round and said: “What is it worth?”

The bookmaker suggested £200.

“Not enough!” I said, shaking my head.

He glanced over his book, let his eyes roam for a moment over the multitude of punters who were falling over themselves to back the favourite, and then named £500 as the limit.

“Right!” said I. “Give me something on account.”

He put two Bank of England £50-notes in my hand, and started to yell out 2 to 1 against the favourite. How he did yell! Lor’ bless me, I’ll hear that yell, which swindled the public, until the Judgment day, and then St. Peter will reproduce it from a golden phonograph as evidence against me! They went on backing him for pounds, shillings, and pence.

Ten minutes later a rumour was spread in the paddock that the favourite had gone amiss. We rushed to the box. The horse was foaming at the mouth, the sweat was dropping off him. The veterinary surgeon was in close attendance. Somebody advised a slight bleeding; others, the open air and a walk round.

With a little difficulty the favourite was got out of the box, a light rug was thrown over him, and he was walked round. He was now lengthened out to 4 and 5 to 1 in the betting, as the public still wanted him. Thousands scoffed and sneered, saying it was a hoax—a ready.

Never did a drug act truer. The doped horse went to the post staggering, as though he had been “shikkered” for a week on bad whiskey. Needless to say, he finished a very bad last.

There were the usual public demonstrations against the stable, the usual hoot, and the usual stewards’ inquiry—none of which altered the position one iota, or reduced my fees one pound. Of course, I got my money; but made the sad mistake of buying a couple of new portmanteaux, and climbing into one or two new suits of clobber (clothes). Suspicion of the doping business fell upon me, and I was watched.

The bookmakers advised me to “get out!”—the climate was too hot—and for that purpose the English Johnny introduced me to a tall, good-looking young man called “The Swell,” presumably because he dressed well, spent money freely, and was just the thing with the women. He was a professional London thief, employed in the honourable and lucrative business of taking stolen or crook gems from London to Calcutta and Bombay, Poona

and India generally, for sale to Rajahs, rich Parsees, and other wealthy natives.

I found The Swell inclined to do the amiable, despite his somewhat patronising air. He assured me that he would take care of me, and see me well introduced in London.

After squeezing another couple of hundred out of the bookmakers, under the threat that I would tell a little tale and give the horse-doping away, my new friend and I sailed for "the greatest City in the World," the home and refuge of the "Sinned against" and the "Sinning." I had no doubt at all as to which category *I* should come under, once landed in London.

CHAPTER III.—BLUEY LANDS IN LONDON.

After our exchange of brotherly confidences, The Swell and I got on capitally together, and, when we landed in the London Dock—I hate the word, dock—I was taken to “Mother’s Home.”

“Mother” was a good natured dame with a full red face—radiant with smiles. When I had had a good look at her, I looked at the door, as though by instinct expecting to see a plate hanging in the window, with the words in gold letters thereon :

MRS. PIXMIFF.

NURSE, LADIES’ ATTENDANT, VACANCIES.

ENQUIRE WITHIN.

But there was no such notice there, and so I concluded that she was, as I had been informed, the “Mother” of the Lodge and of the fraternity of brothers in thieving. I stayed there two days, and then The Swell introduced me, kindly and courteously, to the “Rev.” Father Abraham.

Father Abraham was the first “head” in London—a real top-notch fence and financier of thieves. He possessed barrels of money and owned many pawnshops, which were really *only* agencies for the ramifications of his trade as a “high fence.” In every provincial town his agents were firmly and respectably established. Twenty different “working jeweller” shops flourished under his keen management. His boiling-down pots were never idle. His “unsetting precious stones department” was always working at “full steam ahead.”

A diamond necklace of great value has been known to have been worked out of stolen gems in ten different workshops. Under his directions and critical eye at his own residence, the parts were put together to make one beautiful whole, fit for an empress.

His agents abroad were numerous, and mostly strongly influential. He has supplied the Sultan of Turkey, the Shah of Persia, and even the Emperor of all the Russias with priceless jewels—mostly stolen and re-cut and re-set. Many crook or manufactured gems, principally pearls and emeralds, were sprinkled amongst the genuine gems, just for custom sake—and, of course, to show a profit.

Father Abraham was a quaint character—a German Jew, nationalised in London for commercial causes and to escape military service in the Fatherland. He was short in stature, lean and hungry-looking, his face pale and sallow, his lips thin but firm, his eyes like fierce lamps lighting up his cadaverous face. His look unlocked the secret recesses of your heart and stole your hidden thoughts. His tone was measured, firm, and highly assuring. Show him business—the bigger and more daring, the better—and he would unlock his rascally counters to you.

To the general public he was a respectable, quiet, abstemious, made-in-Germany Jew, who religiously kept the Jewish holy days and holidays, and earned his daily bread by lending money, not as a matter of Christian courtesy, but for interest and compound interest. To the different gangs of swell mobsmen he was their "Daddy," who kept everything he got his long and bony fingers on. He was accounted straight, and would venture large

sums when sure of the man who was working the job. Nor would he grumble at failure, if his man kept sober, acted on lines set down, and blundered not.

A drunken man he abhorred. An uneducated man found little sympathy with him in big exploits. He had a knack of picking the man of action, and faculty for allotting him the position he could fill most effectively and successfully when he drew up the campaign of diamond-getting. He was the Napoleon of London's swell mobsmen. He has been known to lend a very crooked bookmaker, gambler, or thief sums up to £10,000 to enable him to trap, trip, or catch an heiress.

When I appeared before this phenomenon in the thieving-world, he turned his searchlights on me, and then, asking me not to spit on the carpet or throw the cigarette ashes on the table, he passed me a tray, as he said, seriously. "Eberyting to its uses. Dat tray was for de ashes. You Austrālians vas a smart lot, but badly brought up. You require polish."

He questioned me, sharply and deeply, and soon balanced me up, saying to The Swell, "He vas very young--very raw, uneducated, and green. He looks vat he is—a green new-chum. I was disappointed." Still eyeing me, he went on: "You might do for a luggage-rat, but I have gone out of dat line of bizzness, it's too small."

"Luggage rat! What's that?" I asked.

"Oh! Dat's a smart, sober, and honest young man. He vas get a billet on a fashionable steamer—as a steward, say. Den, under our system, he vas open der passenger's luggage bags, and den he take lace and silk, or some odder unconsidderate drifles

—jewellery or odder tings. It was simblicity itself. You nebber touch der locks or fastenings on de portmanteau; you vas leave dem intact. You paint de sewn seams of de portmanteau mit a strong solushon of caustic soda. Dis rots de stitching, de sides are den easily opened, and de contents are at your disposal.

"Oh! It vas so simple, so safe dis way. Many of dese caustic soda exploits are not found out until de luggage is opened at de house of de owner. Most of de silly peoples, especially vimmins, look to see dat de locks and de shtraps vas in order. Den dey go on rejoicing, but minus, of course, der valuables. Good vages vas earned by der caustic soda brigade."

"You see," he went on, "you vas useless for most of de big tings in London or abroad, because you vas so uneducated and green. De yentleman mit money to lose vould not assoshate or blay cards or knock about mit odder peoples dan yentlemen; so I make it de rule nebber to encourage persons, no matter how clever, unless dey are edyucated and hef good address.

"I like you Australians. You are all clever, but you must come to me edyucated. Our race has been de scorn and de yibe of de world for two tousand years, drough de ignorant blunder of von of our dribe, Mr. Yudas Iscariot. He was an unedyucated man, who sold his Master and your Master for dirty pieces of silver. Now, if Mr. Yudas Iscariot had been a man of learning and knowledge, he vould have demanded dirty dimes dirty pieces of gold, and he vould have been paid. Den he could have bought de Potter's Field right out and started a snug and respectable bizzness. His ignorance caused de blunder of working for silver instead of

gold, and ve, of his race, hef to bear de brunt of his mean and contemptible action.

"Edyucation improves de brain power—brain power improves ideas which leads to big prizes, de big fish. Little fish vas sweet, so fools say, but dey vas also bony and dangerous. Fools fills de gaols, as Mr. Yudas Iscariot helped to fill de Potter's Field.

With that, Father Abraham rose and gave me his hand to shake. It reminded me of grabbing a cold, moist, and sticky jellyfish. He watched me to the door, which I was about to close when he said what he wanted to say all along, "Please, remember," he said. "if you do strike someding vord boddering about, see me at once, or if you go smash and get into yail, ask De Swell to see me on your behalf; I'll den help you out on condishon dat you vas keep sober and silent, two great essenshalls for de proffeshnal tief. Good bye, Bluey Grey, good bye. Ha! ha! ha! "

He actually grinned. But what a grin! It would curdle your blood and turn your flesh "goose-like," as mine often turned with the shock when mother put me under the tap for a clean-up at Christmastime. We always washed at home on Christmas Eve—unless it was raining!

When at last The Swell and I got out into the air, I was relieved, and remarked, "Luggage rat! Caustic soda brigade! He's got a blankety cheek—the old anti-pigeater. Likes educated Australians! We'll get a few sent out to order. Is he a fair sample of your hot 'uns in London? "

"He's alright," remarked The Swell. "He's only putting the acid on you. He wants to get the full strength of you. He will keep his eye on you for

months and months, and will then probably call you in, and brand you as one of his brigade. You'll see! I know every move of Father Abraham. He can give the devil points in the oily Gammon Stakes."

Being fairly flush with money, I soon climbed into clothes of the Bond Street cut and Bond Street prices. Then, properly impressed by Father Abraham's advice, I started to learn to read and write. I went to a night school.

I now knocked about with a small gang on the "outer" of the big game. I made several short trips to America, but the play was small, the winnings insignificant. I still struggled with my education, and 'was getting on. It was a grim struggle, and I was often nearly down and under.

I was working to get into the big game. But the jumps are high and the risks great. It's hard work for the beginners—and dangerous work, at best.

The first "lurk" (job) of any importance on which I was employed as a "journeyman" was to get diamonds and other precious stones into the United States, without paying duty.

I was idle in New York, and at pretty low water mark at the time. My clothes were getting shabby, and the gang there with which I worked on the "outer" (outside), so to speak, were principally rats. They were mean thieves. They robbed hotels, picked pockets on racecourses, and touched a till now and then. It was all pettyfogging and very unsatisfactory. I was looking for something bigger and better, and often thought of turning the game up.

At last fortune favoured me. One of the "mob" introduced me to a clever woman "head," who was known to the fraternity as The Countess.

CHAPTER IV.—BLUEY MEETS THE COUNTESS. A FATAL KISS.

WHEN I first saw The Countess I thought she was a true aristocrat. She was beautiful, had a voice like a nightingale, and dressed like a queen. Her education had been completed in Paris. She had so well profited by tuition that she spoke several languages fluently, and could pass, with ease, for anyone of half-a-dozen nationalities. Her history I did not then know, but it was whispered that she had married abroad more than once, and that she had the crest of our brigade—the fleur-de-lys of the French prison—firmly burnt into her skin on her left shoulder.

She had the reputation of being daring, and, when properly roused, it took strong measures to hold her. She came to England, I was informed, as a police-spy on behalf of Russia, and as a thief on her own account. She always displayed plenty of money, and her jewels were of marvellous beauty and, I suppose, great value. The best hotels were hardly good enough for The Countess. But with all her grandeur and womanly vanity, she never lost sight of the main chance, nor forgot her position as “head” of a notorious gang of swell mobsmen.

I was introduced to her in New York. She was almost a stranger amongst the English community. She was employed by two or three highly

respectable firms of London jewellers to smuggle diamonds and precious stones into the States. She received a good commission, and with what she had made in other ways *en route*—such as a carry-all agent for Father Abraham's goods—she was making money quietly and quickly. However, the Customs authorities, tricked for a time, became suspicious of her ladyship.

She had left London in one of the big Atlantic liners with a good parcel of "sparklers" (diamonds), but a wireless message in cipher, delivered to her at sea, warned her that she was watched. She was equal to the occasion. With an auger from the carpenter's bench—whether she stole it or bribed the carpenter into giving it to her, along with a pot of the paint used on the walls of the cabins, is immaterial; she was capable of both—with the auger she bored holes in the floor of her cabin, at a point which adjoined the skirting board, where the under beams were thick and numerous. In these she planted the treasures enclosed in little chamois leather bags. Then she corked and puttied up the mouths of the holes, carefully painted the outer side—and not a trace of her work was visible.

Immediately upon the arrival of the steamer at New York, she was unceremoniously searched. So were her trunks and her cabin. The only things found, however, were affectionate letters from "The Count" (her husband), her children's letters, and family photographs—all of which had been purchased in London and prepared for just such a contingency.

Thousands of apologies and explanations followed for the indignity that had been cast upon The

Countess. She left the steamer, leaving the diamonds concealed in her cabin, and, queen-like, took up her abode at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. That was the very night I was introduced to her.

I was almost struck dumb with her magnificence. Her chirruping laugh was sweetest music in my ears; her gracious presence made me feel like a servitor at the feet of an empress. I shall never forget the look she gave me, when she said: "You do not drink, do you?"

I shook my head.

She informed me that she wanted a simple-looking youth to play the part of an obedient son to an irritable old father on the morrow.

All I could do was to stare at her.

"He has become 'Simple Simon' already," she laughed, "I verily believe he is a simple youth. Are you as simple as you look?" she queried, smiling like an angel.

"I'll try to be," I replied.

She laughed outright—a merry laugh—and said: "Well, go with the gentleman, and he will instruct you. Mind, no mistakes—no inquests after—and no 'ifs' and such nonsense. If you work well, you will be paid well."

The Countess smiled as she uttered her parting words, and I left her, glad to get away with my new friend, who pointed out to me the part I was to play next. The following day found me dressed as a simple youth, struggling up the gangway of an Atlantic liner with a heavy portmanteau. My companion—disguised as a parson of repute from out West—led the way over all obstacles through the saloon. The steward asked my reverend companion what was his business.

"I am going to London for my health. This is my son," he replied, pointing to me. "Please show me cabin No. 177."

It was the very cabin formerly occupied by "The Countess."

The old man looked every inch a German "sky-pilot," and spoke in broken English, well tintured with German, and much fuss and froth.

Everywhere was bustle and excitement. All the stewards and superintendents had a pretty rough time of it. The captain and the chief officer were ashore.

"Here!" said my reverend dad, "Take the port-manteau and place it in cabin 177. It's mine."

"Sorry, sir: not yours, sir."

"Not mine, you rogue? Who's the devil is it?"

No wonder the steward gave a start. Despite the clerical garb, such easy familiarity with the devil could only come from long acquaintanceship. I winked at the steward, and placed a half-sovereign in his hand—just to let him see we were earthly. He pointed out the cabin, but said that it must not be entered, on any account whatever, unless the chief steward gave permission.

My reverend father knew that the chief steward had gone ashore. So he called loudly for that august personage.

Conscious of the favours received, and expecting more to follow, the steward thought that if someone went ashore and got a cab—which are rather expensive luxuries—the chief steward could be found. A sovereign changed hands. The steward—a knowing-looking Cockney—bit it to assure himself of its genuineness, and left to find the chief steward.

Our chance had arrived. The door was locked, but my reverend father made it fly open with astonishing celerity, and we were inside, with the door fastened on us, before anybody had time to notice what we were doing. Once secure inside we got to work on the plan given to us by The Countess, and had just finished, secured the diamonds, and unlocked the cabin door, when the steward returned with the doleful intelligence that that particular compartment was not to be occupied on the return journey, as the New York Shipping Department wished it closed and strictly guarded. My father started a very loud and heated argument with the wretched steward.

In the midst of the debate, I strolled down the gangway and on to the wharf, and, with an absent-minded air, entered a tea room, where I was accosted by a plainly-dressed old lady, who edged me to a side door and through a passage into a back street, where a carriage was waiting. In a few minutes The Countess—for it was she—and I were lost in New York with the diamonds.

I gave The Countess the sparklers, and she "planted" them safely, before luncheon was over.

That night The Countess invited my adopted father and me to supper, which was served in a spacious room of the suite she occupied in a high-class hotel. The old chap explained to us, after he had got away with a bottle of wine, the fun he had had with the stewards. He gave vent to his rage and lodged so many violent expletives—in German, for convenience—on the company, that the stewards, who at first tried to pacify him, got tired of it, and when he went to strike one of them

with his parsonic bell-topper, hat box, his bundles and boxes were pitched on to the wharf.

Of course, the whole story of engaging the cabin was a tale put up on the stewards, after the captain and officers had left the boat to pay calls.

When the Countess bade me farewell, she extended her hand and said, "Good-bye, Bluey Grey, you don't seem a bad sort! I think you are a solid sport. I am afraid I *like* you!"

She held my hand for a moment, as if undecided whether to part with me or not. I closed on her little white hand and gave it a vice-like squeeze. She said, "Yes, I like you. Most women like your sort. But they are not honest enough to admit it."

"Then let me stay with you," I rejoined, "if only on approbation. You can return the goods if they don't suit your taste."

Looking half pleased, half angry, she said: "No, I seem to destroy all the nice boys that get entangled with me. Keep away from me. In the love-making business I am dangerous."

Smiling at her I said, "I don't feel like being in danger. Do you?" Still holding her hand, I said, "I will have a ticket on you, and chance it. My luck must be dead out if I don't pull through."

To this she replied that she had destroyed more men than she could name."

"Finish up the game, then," I said, with a laugh, "by trying to destroy me; but I can promise you this," giving her hand a squeeze, "you won't get a walk-over in the business. I'm no mug."

"I'll allow you," she remarked, "to kiss my hand—then, go!"

"Oh, no! not me," I retorted, "while two such lovely lips are idle." I pressed forward, and

before she could say "No"—if she had wanted to—I planted a bright smack on her lovely lips, pressed her with well assumed frenzy to my heart—and was gone.

After all, she was only a woman, and all women like bold men and kind men. Be bold and kind to a woman, soothe her, flatter her whims and wishes, and she will love you and be a pal to you! Yes, and a good pal every time.

How true her words came back to me, long, long after that fatal night! that fatal kiss! It seems to me, looking back to that woman . . . that Destroyer of Men! . . . that

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them as we may.

CHAPTER V.—BLUEY MEETS OLD DAD.

AFTER the job for The Countess I decided to return to London, and give up the game. But I am afraid thieving was in my blood; I was unable to resist the fixed idea of crime. We lie for the joy of lying, we thief for the joy and excitement of thieving. But, there, it is now too late to moralise.

Let me tell you I never trusted your modern New York or London swell magsmen. Of course, they, in turn, always looked upon me as a puny puppy, to be used in a dirty matter when the risk was great and the game small.

These swell magsmen usually travel in mobs, perhaps four or five, or even six, in each mob. When a big thing is on, they usually take a couple of women with them, and in some cases a clever child or two. They dress in the height of fashion, and have a positive mania for neatness. The women are refined, and lady-like in appearance. Most of them have seen better days. Many of them have a domestic skeleton in their cupboards.

The women and children are taken on board the steamer by the thieves as "sounders." They "word" (sound) the passengers and find out, in a twinkling, who is who. It is marvellous how they get the "strength" of the lady passengers, especially those who have plenty of sparklers and ready money. They ascertain where any *valuable* is kept.

The vanity of woman unfolds itself—nowhere quicker than on board a steamer. They yarn in

their cabins about themselves and their belongings; on deck they scandalise the passengers. The women "sounders" pass their information on to the younger members of the gang. When such information is in hand operations are commenced to rob the passengers.

Appliances of the most up-to-date kind are always used, and when the booty is obtained it is usually secreted in the faked bottoms of cabin trunks. Panels are sometimes removed, by astute workmen, from the sides of a cabin, and the jewellery, money, or other stolen effects are placed in the false bottoms, and all traces are covered up.

The cabin in which the bundles are usually planted is generally occupied by a respectable-looking old gentleman whose grey locks, meek and refined demeanour, quiet and unobtrusive manner secure the respect and esteem of all on board. He frequently poses as an Army Officer on the retired list, and can talk of battles and field manoeuvres until the cows come home to get milked. He is usually the head of the gang.

On board the boat by which I returned to London there was quite a gang of sounders. Of these sounders and magsmen quite an interesting character was one whom everybody called Old Dad. He was a quaint old customer, almost as broad as he was long, bald-headed and bandy-legged, and brimful of fun and tricks. He was an old-time thief.

He romped with the children, chatted with the mothers, and told bush yarns to the new chums. He played a safe game of cards. I joined him in the small play the first night. Dad took no chances, but won every time the pot was worth winning. I soon took a tumble that the jovial Dad was a square

(safe) magsman. Having won nearly a tenner I quitted the game.

The next day Old Dad, hearing me speak of Sydney, casually questioned me about several people and about the land of my birth. Knowing that some of those he named were swell "guns," I pressed the conversation on him, but for a time he was as dumb as an oyster. At last he asked me, incidentally, if Hector Maclean or Michael John Roach or McManamey, of Melbourne, had gone to Heaven or retired from active play in the Thief-catching Stakes.

I told him that they were all well and going strong—Michael John being Chief of Detectives, MacLean an inspector, and McManamey nearly at the top of the tree in his profession as expert thief catcher of Victoria.

Dad's breath was almost jerked out of his big fat body by the news. "That settles it," he said, half to himself, "I shall never see my native land again. Still," he whimpered, "God's good to the poor."

The news of the health and prosperity of these three big battalions of law and order weighed like a ten-pound brick on poor old Dad's heart.

"Talk of freedom, the liberty of the subject," he squealed, "the rights of individuals, and the infernal hog-wash about every man being accounted innocent until he is proved guilty!"

"Talk about the sense of British Justice," he cried, waxing warm. "Why, damn my rags, a respectable person would be safer in Russia than in the country where I was born," he said, glaring at me with his bull dog eyes, "Yes, where my father was born and died, wrongfully accused."

"Why," he proceeded, "I am told that, acting on the advice of devil-dodging sky-pilots, they have now

made a law known to the fraternity as the 'Kathleen Mavourneen' Act. It is called the intermediate law. It gives the judges the power to declare a convicted person to be a habitual criminal, and to keep him in gaol as long as they jolly well please. 'It may be for years and it may be for ever,' he added, humming a few bars of the famous Irish melody. "Very good, but no good to Dad."

Dad had been a burglar, and was badly "wanted." Preferring something less risky than burglary, he took to card sharpening while travelling as a "fence" between the great cities of Liverpool and New York.

The day before we reached Liverpool, he approached me confidentially, and said, "I see, my young Joker, you are a smartie, but you are new at the game. Your education has been neglected, and you don't fit into your clothes properly. However, I wish you well, and, if you don't mind taking an old man's advice you may have a run of luck, and keep "out" for years. If you join any of the gangs you are spotted and marked at once—in New York, they are all known—so, although a youngster, you have to carry top weight in the handicap for Magging Stakes. These places are so full of people with money that it is not hard for a decent worker, who don't drink, to make something more than a living. Why, bless my heart, it takes the copper half a lifetime to find you out if you work alone. Never take a policeman into partnership—they all squeak when you're in the hailstorm. No, give the burglar-policeman a miss in baulk. They want goods for nothing. If you are unfortunate enough to get caught, and have got money behind you to play

with—well, America is the place to shed it for your liberty. The lawyers there will argue anything, for money. They will prove you are not a thief at all, but that you have an uncontrollable propensity to take what isn't yours. They will say it is a microbe in the blood, and that you are more to be pitied than blamed, as you want to be honest, but the microbe in the blood will not allow you to be honest. I will give you my address in London," said Dad. "I may be of service to you—or it may be the other way about. We are both brothers on foreign soil, and should help each other all we can."

I casually asked Dad if he knew The Countess.

"The Countess!" exclaimed Dad. "Do you know that she-devil?"

I nodded.

"Well, keep away from her," he said seriously. "She is the very incarnation of Satan; a she-wolf; a fiend in the shape of an angel. She has destroyed more men and women than any other she-devil. She is a police spy, and, while she spies on thieves from foreign countries, she robs on her own account in these countries. Hundreds of political suspects from Russia and other countries owe their destruction to her. Keep away from her. She will charm you like a serpent, and sting like an adder. I know her history well, and will some day relate it to you."

CHAPTER VI.—QUAINT PHILOSOPHY.

OLD Dad took quite an interest in me, and put me up to many a wrinkle. "Always, my lad," he said to me one day, "be nice and polite to the women folk on board. If they are old, skittish, and absurd, you must be nicer to them. Some women have big tongues and small brains. They are spiteful when ruffled, and quick to 'tumble' to a sharper. Half-a-dozen on board have only to call you a cad or a card-sharper, and you are 'gone a million!' Always dress neatly, and see that your clothes are tight-fitting. Keep your powder dry, and never miss getting off the mark at the word 'Go.' "

"At table don't talk out of your turn. Spend half the meal-time passing the mustard and hot stuffs to the old dames sitting near you, and spend the other half answering questions, with occasional ejaculations, such as 'Good gracious!' 'Oh, dear me!' 'I never heard that before!' 'How strange!' and *smile with every remark*. But don't crack your face in smiling. At table help everybody before yourself. In the cabins or on the top deck always help yourself to 'trifles.' "

"To children always be agreeable. Through the children you win the hearts of the parents, although most of the young brats I have come across when travelling would make a saint swear, or drive a parson to the bottle—not the milk bottle, but the gin bottle.

"Avoid religious arguments. There are very few

religious people in the world, very few. Ninety per cent. of the sects who preach the Word of Christ, with variations, follow the lead of the devil without any variation, and are prepared, on the shortest notice, to tear each other in pieces for the alleged honour and glory of the just and living God.

"Religious lunacy not only upsets individuals, but it disturbs nations, and at times it has been known to make the earth tremble with its pitiless ferocity. Therefore, my boy, avoid it altogether. It's no good to the likes o' you and me, although it is recreation and profit for many."

"In travelling, always pal up with the servants or maids on board. Lose no time. Get to the maid straight. Miss a meal or two, now and again, to yarn to a maid in her mistress's cabin. Swear to her how much you love her, with, of course, a dicer's oath. Buy her cheap chocolates and nicknacks, and never forget that the maid is often the surest spring to show the effects of value carried by the mistress. Yes, they are a great help, if properly mashed. I have known some of the biggest harvests to be cut with this sickle.

"The old dame of the much-travelled sample—she with the warts on her nose and a struggling moustache on her upper lip that you might envy—treat her with consideration. Walk the deck with her until you knock up; let her, like an ancient patriot, do the talking. Let her be your teacher and your guide, and, when parting, solicit her address and the privilege to continue the friendship. Then she's a 'gone-er.' Old and ugly women love a lad jerked on to their minds towards the evening of their existence. They like gossiping, scandalising, and now and

then, strictly on the quiet, making a bit of dry and ancient love.

"Always seem to be what you are not," Dad continued, "and never miss paying America a visit when the Presidential election is on.

"What do you generally travel as?" Dad asked.

"Oh!" I replied, "principally as a jockey; sometimes as a servant."

"That's good," said Dad. "Servant is good. Jockey is good. They are both good, my boy. You see, folks travelling run after jockeys as donkeys run after carrots—principally stage carrots. They do it because they expect something. They do it because they are thieves, by instinct, in their own hearts. Everybody is a thief, more or less. The goody-goody will steal your master's information from you to get the bulge of somebody else for the purpose of backing a dead certainty in a race with the stolen information. Pious souls will tell you that it is no harm to rob a bookmaker.

"We are all thieves, my lad; only degrees separate us. Some go to gaol; others keep out. There are felons in one class and heroes in another. As Josh Billings would say, 'If you steal a dollar, you are a criminal; if you steal a million, you are a hero.'

"It does not matter if that million comes out of the hearts of the people or the treasure trunks of the people, you are still a hero. Napoleon stole pictures, furniture, and pieces of carved marble, called art, and even crockery, as well as money, lands and ships. He was a wholesale murderer and a tyrant, but he was always a hero. Mighty thieves flourish in the great free nation of America with their 'rings' and their 'trusts' and their 'combinations,' their gangs,

and their Black Hands, and their Tammany. Thieving with them has become a science. But if you knock a youngster over and take its milk can, or if you steal a door mat, or nip a silk wipe, you commit a crime under the law; yes, a serious crime.

"There always were and always will be in this world thieves of different grades. Even the Saviour did not attract twelve men to follow Him in His work of love and charity without picking up a thief. He did not complain, although the percentage in those days was considered excessive. Now, it is the other way about. It would be a marvel, I believe, to find one honest man in any twelve gathered together in piety.

"Mr. Adam, a gentleman who lived before the earth cooled, was, we are told, the first man. He was also the first thief. One man, one thief. Such was the goodly percentage in those early days. Had a policeman been set to watch Adam more apples might have disappeared, but the percentage of dishonesty would have been the same.

"Being a thief-taker by profession, the policeman has, of course, a bit both ways. Not but what there are lots of square heads in the police force in England. There the boodling bobby is the exception. In America, the dollar grabber is the rule in the force. In Chicago, a joint stock company exists among the police for permitting robberies and other crimes to flourish. Unfortunate women who have already sold their souls to the devil of debauch are forced, by the system of the Police Vice Trust, to pay the guardians of the law for the privilege of carrying on their socially crooked calling.

"The Chicago cracksman is compelled, under the Trust rules, to hand the Police Association their

whack of his swag. If he neglects to do so, he is 'gruelled.' Money coiners, opium dealers, pandars in prostitution for Chinese brothels are unofficially licensed by stumping up ready cash to the State-paid thief catchers. Immunity from arrest for present crimes, and absolution for past misdeeds are both purchasable.

"It is not playing the game, for all that. I have no time for the officer who takes coin from both sides. It's a heads-I-win-tails-you-lose business. New York comes a good next to Chicago, but the Tammany 'ring' there clips the wings of the individual in authority who thrives on thieving, because Tammany is the boss thief, and will not stand petty larceny being practised by its subordinates. Tammany is something more than a political machine. It is a kind of religion of this world, with the Almighty Dollar on the Great White Throne. It has many thousands of adherents who cling to it, obey it, and support it, because it dispenses the good things of *this* life. It offers rewards for loyalty and services rendered. Here, below, other religions give you post-dated promissory notes made payable in the world to come, with a practical certainty of their being dishonoured by St. Peter; but Tammany offers you a 'cut' in this world, and sometimes a good fat 'cut.' It's all a matter of self-interest degrees of the thieving status—nothing more.

"I never paid police toll, thank goodness. I consider feeding the police with coin is very like trying to appease the ravenous appetite of a hungry lion with penny mince pies. When you are exhausted by throwing them, he is hungrier than before, and is ready to claw and bite you for not continuing,

although your basket of pies has been emptied on the brute.

"Take it from me, my lad, we are all thieves; it is only in different grades. Chicago is the hottest place on earth, and could, I think, in a square competition, run hell a short head. Its systematic and scientific methods of dealing with crime and vice out-stride all other trades and professions. Those who run the Joint Stock Vice Companies in Chicago and New York are to be found in stupendous numbers everywhere—except in gaol. There is only a small sprinkling in gaol, for show purposes; but enough to keep the game afloat, and prevent the gaols from closing up *in toto*.

"So, cheer up, cheer up, my boy, and never say die until a dead mule kicks you! Remember you belong to the oldest, the safest, and the most prosperous guild in the world. It dates back to the beginning of things, when Mr. Appletree Adam was its founder and first president. Amongst its members it counts Kings and Emperors, Queens and Dowagers, Princes and Princesses, Presidents, and Bankers, likewise Millionaires, each of whom hold an overtime ticket, which entitles them to work day and night. The tale is not complete until you dive down through every degree of society, right to the dirt box—there you may find the man who would steal the hairs out of the tail of a blind man's dog to clean his pipe!"

Old Dad laughed right out. His fat sides shook, and his hilarity was only stopped by a timely stitch in his side. We parted at Southampton, where Dad gave me his address, but asked me to stow it away in case of accidents.

CHAPTER VII.—THE COUNTESS AGAIN.

I WAS in London now—in funds, in luck, and with The Countess. We both put up at a first-class London Hotel. Madam, who occupied a suite of splendid rooms, spent a great part of her time in and about the city. She held many secret interviews with members of our fraternity, but she rarely consulted me; she seemed to avoid me. At times she looked nervous and afraid. She was always very circumspect in her conduct.

One night she came home with an American swell and a couple of gay friends, who appeared to have dined heartily. I was in her drawing-room when she entered. I noticed that Madam was pretty flushed with wine. She introduced me to her friends as her brother. Wine and cards were ordered.

I took "a hand," just to make up a set. The play was only small. I lost a little. My game was *not* to win, but to get the strength of the visitors. I soon reckoned them up, especially the younger American swell, whom she called Frank. His people were, I was told, Chicago millionaires. They packed pork and pickled sausages, and their only trouble seemed to be to get rid of their cash.

I made up my mind to pickle this pork packer if chance threw him in my way. The play was dreary and uninteresting, and they seemed to want to drink wine—not play cards. Well, my idea of dealing with these young gentry was that he who pays the piper calls the tune. The cards were

knocked off. More wine was called for, and an animated conversation ensued as to the sights and beauties of Paris. It was nearly daylight when our visitors departed, after having made an appointment to visit the opera the next night.

When they had gone, Madam said: "Frank Hampden has tons of money and no brains. I have plenty of brains, and money is getting short; so I intend to exchange these commodities as 'Measure for Measure, or What you Will.' He wants to see Paris, but I dare not take him there. There is something in Paris ——" and she stopped, her eyes riveted on me.

Continuing, she said: "Dare I tell you? No, I won't tell you. There is something in Paris that you must not know. You may some day know it, Bluey, but to-night you must not know. You see I am flushed with wine. I am a little excited. I have within my grasp a bird to pluck, and if I can make a success of it you and I will leave this hole and strike out in a new country by ourselves. Yes, Bluey, I'll take you away as my only pat."

"Here's a pretty prospect," I thought. "What have I done to warrant this?"

After a few moments' reflection she said: "I don't think I can hold this fellow here, Bluey. You had better go with him to Paris. Show him the sights, protect his health as well as you can, and land him back here to me unsmashed and unattached. If he once gets away to Paris on what you Australians call his 'own little pat,' then we're done—but there, you can take charge of him. You can go with him. You will be my officer in charge, and I will only ask you not to rob him too frequently *en route*, but to land him back here to me safe and sound,

and once he is here I will rob him of anything from twenty to fifty thousand pounds."

"He thinks," she added, "that I have tons of money, and that my position in Society is assured. He thinks every drawing room in England is open to me, and his ambition—when he is sober enough to think of anything—is that The Countess Valleric should take the son of a Chicago pork butcher, with a smell of the pickled pork on him, into the best drawing rooms in England. Vanity and pride are the devil's best weapons, and vanity and pride are going to land for me this man of Chicago, whose people make sausages. He is bent on Paris. I cannot stop him. You, Bluey, must show him Paris without any delay. Give him as good a time as you can, and land him back here into these arms. I will do the rest."

In a drizzling rain Frank Hampden and I started for Paris—gay Paree, the harlot of all cities. Father Abraham and The Countess saw us off at Charing Cross Station. My new friend with the old puritan name was full of importance and champagne, and bustled and hustled on the platform, and fumed in the carriage, as though he were about to lick creation. The wretched porters came in for a good deal of punctuated abuse about the luggage, and a good tip for doing nothing.

Father Abraham was all solicitude for the welfare of the man from Chicago. It seems the old Jew moneylender had been discounting bills for this scion of the house of pig-stickers.

We arrived in Paris by express, with the speed with which fools and drunkards go to the devil. We put up at the Ritz Hotel, and started quickly on our sightseeing.

Frank Hampden being anxious to see Parisian life, I escorted him to a gilded hall, where I had reason to believe he would get what he wanted. It was lighted by electricity, burnished with gold, and draped with silver and velvet hangings. The entrance to a king's drawing room was not a comparison to the luxury and magnificence of the vestibule through which we passed. On our entrance we were accosted by a portly dame, called Madam. A little beyond, in evening dress, sat Monsieur, several diamonds glittering on his fawning person.

At the ticket office we purchased tickets that would enable us to witness whatever was to be seen at the establishment.

In an exquisitely-furnished inner compartment 60 or 70 beautifully-formed young women lounged and lolled on silken cushions. They drank wine and made languishing love with their eyes. There were dancing women there; they kicked often and kicked high. Applause was lavished on them; sometimes gifts.

My friend from Chicago hardly knew how to contain himself. He wanted to be funny and brutal at the same time. He got into a conversation, in broken English, with a pretty blonde, and growing restive, or boisterous, under the effects of the heat of the room, the wine, and the importance of his money, he struck the girl, who stumbled and fell.

Immediately there arose a screeching of damosels, a rush to the assistance of the fallen girl, and all the mild excitement that attends these half-hourly occurrences in such places. The girl was taken away to be consoled and soothed with a five-

franc piece—thrown at her as you would throw a bait to a dog—by the Chicago millionaire's son.

Madam and Monsieur had also to be satisfied. An indignity had been put upon their house, licensed by a liberal Government. Twenty-five francs would about satisfy their outraged and wounded feelings, and the money was thrown at them, as we would throw a poisoned bait to a dingo in Australia.

I made up my mind, on the spot, to take no chances with this gentleman from Chicago, but to rob him—yes, rob him; rob him, late and early; rob him, often; and rob him all the time.

How do the beautiful women whom the visitor meets at the palaces of vice get there? A dark-haired, gazelle-eyed girl who hailed from the South of France answered the question for me as regards her own story, which may be taken as typical.

Her people were farmers. They had a small holding in the South of France. There were two sisters and four brothers. They worked their own land, and by dint of industry eked out an existence that kept body and soul together, paid the Church taxes, and prevented the old father and mother being carried to a pauper's grave. More than this of their existence need not be said.

Necia was the comeliest of the family. She was admired in the village by the rustic lads, and envied by the girls with whom she skipped to school, or with whom she sang the Vesper hymns in the old rustic church. Her position and her duty lay clearly before her. She was destined, under proper laws and proper government, to become a helpmate to a man and a mother of men.

But as Necia was budding into womanhood, there

appeared in the village a certain personage who was euphemistically called the Recruit Master. He had come to canvass the poorer families for recruits to fill up the places caused by death, disease, and destruction in what he was pleased to term "The Beauty Classes of Paris."

The ignorance of Necia's people was colossal; her innocence—which is but another name for ignorance—was hardly less appalling. They were all led to believe that Necia's beauty and form had been singled out by a wise Providence to make her a fine lady in Paris. She signed on, as they say in the shearing shed in Australia, and became a recruit for three years, at so much per year.

I pitied this poor Necia. She frankly told me that if she escaped disease—which was highly improbable—or death, or both, she would fill in her contract, and then have enough money to take back to her village, where she might marry a rustic. But she shook her head and sadly said: "Such as we do not become the mothers of our nation."

Frank Hampden and I stayed at one of the best hotels. All was life, animation, debauch. We turned night into day, and day into night, in an infernal round of gambling, gorge, and drink.

The end came at last. My man of gold got a burning fever that other complaints helped to keep aflame. For days he lay semi-conscious. I had to conduct his business. I had to see his doctors, get his signatures for the bank, pay bills, and take his valuables out of the safe deposit. It was just lovely.

He gradually grew worse, until I feared that the pace we had gone had killed the goose that was laying the Chicago golden eggs. I suggested to

the doctors that the air of some salubrious hamlet outside Paris might bring about a return of health. The doctors assented, and a change of climate was decided upon.

CHAPTER VIII. — OFF TO CHICAGO. THE SHADOW OF THE "BLACK HAND."

THE doctor ordered Frank Hampden to the quietude of Turin. I went as his nurse and his faithful friend. Poor chap! He grew worse, and his banking account was growing low. But it never can be said that anyone of the Bluey Grey breed, reared up on poverty's used tea leaves, ever "deserted a gal or a pal." I stayed with him to the end. And the end soon came.

The Italian doctor reported his death to the authorities. I telegraphed to his brothers, who were too busy packing pickled pork, tripe, and horse sausages, to come over to bury their beloved brother. They asked me to bring his belongings and meet one of the family in London.

Well, I brought what was left. Strange as it may seem, a lot of jewellery was missing. Strange, too, that a £300 draft, on a Paris bank, which Father Abraham had sent him, had been cashed—and not a cent remained. The fact was, I was on earth and wanted feeding. He was under earth, where he fed the worms. We were quits.

I met one of the dead man's brothers in London. He had come all the way from Chicago to gather together his brother's belongings. A sober, religious-looking individual was he, slow to act, and slow to speak, and when he did speak it was in a measured monotonous tone. In a low voice, he

informed me that he had long ago predicted Frank's downfall, on account of drink.

He invited me to dine with him that night, but for a day or two he was pretty shy of my company. I knew he was watching my actions, and making inquiries as to my character. From the waiter and hall porters and the clerk in the office, he learned that I had the reputation of being a splendid-living young man—which was only natural, seeing that I constantly tipped them.

The name I was passing under was an eminently respectable one. Duncan St. Clair I called myself.

The pickled pork packer, having thoroughly satisfied himself that I was a properly-conducted young man, invited me to accompany him to his home, where, he said, his mother would like to see the first of the man who saw the last of her beloved son.

We sailed on one of the Atlantic greyhounds, all my expenses being paid by the sausage packer. Before we started, I engaged, as valet, a fat-chopped Italiano, who always had a leer on his face, and was ready to bow at a moment's notice and call you "my lord" or "my master," even without notice.

So we started, bag and baggage, master and valet. On board the liner I was introduced to the best American Society, a fair sprinkling of which belonged to the "upper 400," by which phrase is meant men and women with money to "burn." In as unobtrusive a manner as possible, I tried a little business with them—for the good of my health. As a start, I introduced a little game of poker, at half-a-crown rise.

The square-headed George Hampden, who had charge of me, was a bit shocked, but as I had nothing to do with his nervous system, and was out to get money, I soothed him as best I could, without breaking with him. I lost £15 at the opening sitting. I received a severe reprimand from my protector, whom the Lord seemed to be pretty carefully protecting from me and my wiles and guiles.

I, of course, appeared dejected, and said: "If I had the courage I'd play again to-morrow night, and try to get my money back."

"Well," said my newly-fledged protector, "I like a man with courage and determination. Go, and play to-morrow, and try to win your money back. Then drop the game, for it is no good to any man."

I thanked my patron saint from Chicago, and played a hand or two the next night. I still lost, and, in a fit of ungovernable temper, I pitched the cards overboard, and yelled to the steward to bring me a couple of new packs. I paid him the exact fee for the cards, and proceeded to deal *with my own cards*.

The luck came my side all right. In fact, it was phenomenal. When my opponents held threes—that is three aces, three queens, or three kings—I had four tens. If they had a full hand with queen or jack high, I had a full hand with ace high. I won a hundred and sixty two golden jingles that night. This was my second night out. My luck and fame spread all over the boat, like a bucket of spilt soap suds.

The old ladies congratulated me, and brought their little lists for subscriptions to the Seamen's Homes, the Conversion of Thieves Society, the Anti-Drink and Anti-Gambling Association, the

Cross Guild, the Guild to Aid the Reformed, and the Deserted Wives Guild.

Of course, I gave each a little, and double to the Cross Guild, as I had been "on the cross" all my life. I couldn't help being on the cross. It wasn't my fault; my mother brought me up on the bottle—the beer-bottle, with a cross on it.

I modestly explained that it was no business of mine winning money, and that such a thing had never happened before. The old ladies said: "What a nice lad! How sweet of him!" The young ones said: "What a darling boy! How manly! Oh, how simple!" But they all advised me to forswear card playing, as it was a game invented by the Naughty One below!

My square-headed host from Chicago was a bit shocked, and told me that now I was more than even I had best pass the game out.

So I spent the third night with the ladies in the drawing-room, but found time to have a secret interview with the second bar steward. He was now my chum. And what a simple beauty he was! With half-a-dozen like him I could rob the world.

The card-playing went on as usual, my absence being regretted. The ladies in the drawing-room sang and played, and I recited, "How we beat the Favourite." I also gave them, with much feeling and effects:—

Hail! Australia, Land of Beauty,
Sovereign of the Southern Seas.

I dwelt on the "seas" until I completely broke down, and the last words were the last straw. Pulling a white silk handkerchief from the pocket of my dinner jacket, I turned away to dry my tears, and nervously strutted on to the deck, whilst the

"old cats' " party exclaimed, "Poor fellow; how nice, to think of his country, and it so far away!"

When on the deck, I glanced round in search of the second bar steward, whose little commission should by now have been fulfilled. But, instead of the steward, I met the gaze of my *valet de chambre*. This was the third or fourth occasion I had seen him prying after me. His large dark eyes, with small, purple, penetrating pupils, could be very disconcerting at times. The whites of his eyes were a bilious yellow—the look of those deadly eyes never seemed to be off me.

Already I hated the fellow, and even wished that I were strong enough to throw him overboard. He wanted to know if I required anything.

"Anything!" I hissed. "Anything to be rid of your cursed presence. Why do you dog my heels all over the ship? Go to your own quarters, you inquisitive dog, and stay there until I send for you."

His eyebrows lowered, his lips set firmly. But only for an instant. He bowed, with a smile, showing a row of yellowish, uneven teeth, and said: "Pardon, pardon, Monsieur. No dog, monsieur; no dog, monsieur; no dog." Thus he cringed away.

I met the steward, and, with half a dozen words, our interview ended. I returned to the ladies' cabin to say "Good-night," and explained that I nearly always broke down when I thought of my dear Australian home, the garden, the flowers, and the ivy clinging to the walls and mounting steadily but surely, day after day, to take possession of the turret on the roof of the dear old home.

They exclaimed, "Poor fellow! Poor dear! *How* very nice!"

On retiring, I passed the card room and popped my head in the open door just to say "Good-night," when a large number of voices called out, "Come here, St. Clair! Come in, St. Clair, and give us our revenge. Come along, old chappie!"

I shook my head, and said, "No; I can't afford to be a bad boy for more than two nights in one week." With that, I ran downstairs to my cabin. But I could not rest that night. I tossed and rolled from one side of the bunk to the other—the look of my valet haunted me like a horrible nightmare. When I did doze off, I woke up with a start, thinking that he was sawing my neck in two.

Next morning, worn out and half dead, I cursed the fates that put this devil in my path, and fully resolved to pitch him to Halifax when we landed in New York.

With swollen eyes and parched lips, I remained in my room. Antonio—all smiles, as though nothing had happened—brought me my breakfast, and then I told him, with a growl, to depart.

Being sure that he had gone, I opened my portmanteau with the secret spring and got to work at my "tats" (dice) and cards. I had a machine—you know those little machines that they have for loading dice—and I got hard at work preparing to deal it out hot and strong, to the mugs on board, with whom I should gamble that day.

In the middle of this congenial occupation my own paid private detective, Antonio, popped in, and caught me in the act. There was no getting out of it. He saw distinctly what I was doing, although I tried to smother it. With an oath I ordered him out of the room, and when he had gone I packed my things up securely, being suspicious.

I then dressed for dinner, and went to give those from whom I had won, what they wanted—their revenge at cards!

The two strangers I had noticed before were at play. I spotted them at once as “guns.” The first hand I got was three aces, one ten, and a nine. I rose on the blind. So did they. I still rose, and they still rose. The stake was now a considerable one.

Strangers had crowded into the card-room; officers and passengers were looking over their shoulders. The excitement was keen. The contest was really between the two strangers and myself. The other hands had been thrown into the pack.

The elder of the two had four kings. I, with three aces, a nine, and a ten, lost, of course. I lost £36 on that hand. I threw the cards down in despair, and rose from my seat to get a mouthful of air whilst they were dealing. My first gaze on stepping on the deck rested upon the monster grin on the face of my valet, Antonio.

“Curse him!” I muttered. “Will he never leave me alone? Will his devilish grin and yellowish eyes and black teeth never get away from my sight?”

“Go to my cabin, and get my cigars,” I roared.

He went off, with a grin that showed his dirty and ill-kept teeth.

The night was hot, and so was I. Play was warm, and the strangers warmer. I had my doubts, as the Scotchman says, as to whether all was fair and above board. It is an outrageous thing for a man who has got to get his living at

cards to meet others at the same table and after the same fish. It is little better than blacklegging.

While making this momentary reflection, my favourite friend, the second steward, whispered to me, "Knock off! You are playing with card-sharpers. They belong to the London Swell Mob Magsmen."

"Guns!" I exclaimed, involuntarily. "Are you sure?"

"Dead sure!" And with this remark the steward disappeared.

CHAPTER IX.—BLUEY AND THE "GUNS."

"GUNS!" I mused. "Well, if they are 'guns' this ship is not big enough for three. From its dimensions it should only carry one 'gun,' and I will be that 'gun.'"

I received my cigars, strolled back, apologised for keeping the company waiting, and so the play went on. This time I had a full hand, queens high.

"I am out of it," said I, throwing down my cards. "Fight it out yourselves, gentlemen."

They did. The "guns" won. Won every time, in fact.

It was now the square head's deal at my right. I gazed on my hand, and threw it into the pack. "I am not playing," said I.

It was my deal next. I collected the cards, and, casually knocking the ashes off my cigar, asked whose they were.

"They are mine," said "Gun" No. 1. "I bought them at Southampton. They are not a bad pack."

"Then," I exclaimed, coolly puffing at my cigar, "they are the cards of a cheat."

"A cheat!" everybody echoed. It was as good as a play to watch the effect of my words.

"What do you mean?" asked one player.

"I mean nothing more nor less than that these cards have been tampered with. They have been 'edged' by someone."

The sensation was simply grand. The square head examined the cards closely, and I rose to quit the room.

"Sir, whatever your name may be," bawled one of the "guns," "you owe some apology"

"I owe no apology," I retorted. "I merely say the cards are 'edged.' There the matter must end. I don't know who 'edged' them, and I don't care. You may have been imposed upon, but I swear I will not be imposed upon."

"Well, I may have been imposed upon," remarked one of these bland gentlemen who live on the fat of the land and do no work.

"Let us throw them overboard," I said.

"Very well, throw them overboard, and buy some at the bar."

I rang the bell, and my steward appeared. I said, "Bring some cards, quickly."

The "guns" paid the steward for the cards. They examined the outer paper which was intact, and the play started on my deal. I gave myself four kings, and rose on the blind. They came into the blind and re-rose. The square head on my right hand had a good hand, and he chipped in. It rose to a pretty fair stake. I was called. I won. They had four tens, four jacks and three queens. It was a good stake. I won £40. I played on, and on, until I was over £200 in hand.

The gentlemen following the same occupation as myself were getting *nothing*. I think they "took a tumble" to my calling in life, for they raised a rather heated argument over my deal. I gathered the cards together, and, in a fit of indignation, hurled them over the starboard side, and walked quietly out of the room, with a remark appropriate to one who has come up to the stool of repentance to be saved. "Gentlemen," I said, "I will never touch a card again."

And I didn't—that trip.

I was more than £300 ahead of it, and I intended to propose something safer than card playing to relieve my American cousins of some of their spare cash.

I popped a tenner into the hand of the steward, shouted for three or four bar trotters, who infest these boats, lit a good cigar, and walked the deck alone, to contemplate what my next move would be. Every step I took I fancied my valet's eye was following me.

Oh! that valet was a red-hot gentleman. Red-hot, as though he came from regions below. I am sure the ashes could not have been properly brushed off his clothes when I engaged him. He was not a valet, at all; but simply a private detective, engaged by myself to watch and spy on my actions.

Isn't it rich? Fancy a man engaging a valet to detect himself, when the bulk of that man's occupation in life is to dodge detection! It is about the richest dish of soup that ever I tasted. Indeed, my advice to the whole universe, and to Australians in particular, is, "never have, touch, taste, or handle"—as they say in the Band of Hope, of which I was once a shining light—never engage a *valet de chambre*. If, however, you must have one on a journey kill him before you return!

CHAPTER X.—GOOD ADVICE TO BLUEY.

HOWEVER, it was not Antonio, but Mr. Hampden, who joined me as I strolled along the deck.

"Well, lad," he began in his best preaching style, "you are quite a reprobate—an inveterate gambler! Why do you keep out of my company? Why do you haunt those gambling rooms on board? Rows in the card room are spread abroad. Take a pull before it's too late, or the one door of retreat—that is respectability and self-respect—is closed against you. Once you lose the respect of yourself, you are done. Gambling and drinking are amongst the worst destroyers of individuals, both of womanhood and manhood.

"Think of your dear old home in Australia," he went on, "your sweet-voiced mother and your happy-faced father, sitting together in their cottage under the blessed sun that shines on that happy land befringed by the Southern Ocean, and guarded over by the Southern Cross on high. Think, I say, of those kind and dutiful parents that you have mentioned, with tears in your eyes! Think of them, praying for you at home, and give up this accursed vice. It will grow on you, and finally weigh you down to such an extent that the very devil himself will grapple you, and all God's angels cannot save you."

Poor chap! He groaned and moaned as he put his hand on my shoulder, and gazed at me fair in the face, like a kind magistrate reading you a lecture before giving you fourteen days' for breaking a bottle on a Chinaman's head.

I must confess, I honestly confess, that the tears came into my eyes as I grasped his manly hand—from a child I could always cry, without notice. I vowed I would not touch a card again. It was a vow I meant, too, for I was then preparing the dice. Cards were going out and dice were coming in.

I told him I had a heavy burden on my soul. He bade me unburden it, and let him carry some of it, saying, in quite his American fashion: "If peace and contentment are to be purchased with dollars"—made out of packing pickled pork—"the price is no object."

My *valet de chambre*, I gasped, was, I thought, a madman I was afraid of him. I believed him to be an anarchist. What would I do? What could I do?

"Well," replied my friend coolly, "discharge him, after paying him off. That is all you can do, and that is all you are expected to do. If he wants a little compensation, why compensate him certainly; but discharge him. If you don't care for the disagreeable job, I will do it for you, quite willingly. He must go if told to do so."

I gave his hand one squeeze of gratitude, and merely murmured, "Thanks! thanks!"

By Jove! At that moment I swore I heard a movement amongst the pile of deck chairs and lounges, and instinctively apprehended that my own paid spy had heard every word. He was on my nerves, and I feared that before we got to New York he would be on my chest, with his fingers at my throat.

I slept well that night. I was relieved at the prospect of getting rid of my spy, who always

seemed to have a hangman's rope on his arm ready to lasso me. The next morning he brought me my coffee to my cabin. I decided to be civil to him.

He asked me if he should "Shave master."

I shuddered, and replied, "No."

I asked him, quite casually, which part of Italy he belonged to. He sighed, look stupid, shook his greasy head, showed his yellow teeth, and exclaimed in broken English: "Oh, long way before my master."

I sipped my coffee, and looked steadily at him the while. I was nearly asking him when he had washed his face last—it looked as if that "was a long time before master," too.

"What part of Italy do you come from, Antonio?"

"Oh, my mudder, my fadder, my brudder," he answered, "all come from zē Turin. You know Turin?"

"Turin!" I gasped. "Did you say Turin?"

"Yes, master, me say Turin." His eyes danced in a devilish fashion, and his mouth expanded with a grin, until it resembled a slice cut out of a water melon with an axe.

"Turin," he repeated

"Turin! Oh! I have been there," I said, with an assumed air of decidedly wet jocularly.

"Yes," he muttered, "master been there." He grinned again, and backed his unwashed carcass out of my cabin, giving me a parting grin, as he went.

I threw the remains of the coffee out of the port hole, sat down on the cabin settee, and, says I to myself, says I, "Here's a go! Did this dog know me at Turin? I spent six months there, with the dead man—with him." I almost whispered the last two

words to myself, afraid to trust the cabin walls with the two words "with him."

Large beads of perspiration oozed from my forehead, my throat and lips were dry and parched, and I felt as if my very eyes had started to swell and had got too big for their sockets.

"With him," I whispered again, to myself. "With him! Turin! I wish I had never seen him or Turin."

Then I roused myself, and said, "Pooh! What has this dog to do with me? Pooh! The height of his ambition is to sell fish or grind an organ at street corners. I am not fit to die or dip into the bosom of America to make my living by my wits, if I am to be frightened by this greasy macaroni chewer. Well, I will be good to him. I think he is a home-made spy. I simply made him such myself. I will now give him presents. I will make friends with him, and then lose him in New York."

He returned to my cabin.

"Oh! Antonio, you smoke, don't you?" I said, cheerily. "Well, take that big pipe there."

It was one I stole in London just to keep my hand in practice.

He took the pipe, with a grunt, but no thanks, as though he was a sort of travelling receptacle where presents might be dropped in without acknowledgment.

I strolled along the deck with the square heads with whom I had been playing.

I was now at peace with the world, and the world appeared to be at peace with me. The only cloud that now and again obscured the brilliancy of my sun's orbit was that terrible *valet de chambre*.

CHAPTER XI.—BLUEY'S "PRIVATE DETECTIVE."

THAT night I appeared in the drawing-room, and mingled freely with the dear ladies, young and old. I really tried to please the dear girls. I was very much tempted, once or twice, to "pinch" a diamond brooch from an old "girl," who would insist on tickling, squeezing, and pinching me. She declared that I was "a dear little chap." She praised my rosy cheeks, and said Australia must be a charming country.

I retired early. Antonio was awaiting my return in my cabin; in fact, he did nothing, night or day, but wait and watch for me. With a grin, he extended his greasy paw, and said, "Master left this out on the floor."

By Columbus! What do you think he handed me? The dice-loading apparatus! I was struck silly. It was a knock-out blow. I must have left it out when locking my portmanteau.

"It is nothing," I stammered, taking the thing from him. "Antonio, you may go."

Still he stood. He was not grinning now. A dark and threatening frown was on his face as he said, in slow and measured tones and in excellent English, "The tools of the trade of a thief are dangerous implements for a gentleman to carry about with him. Good night, Sir," emphasising the "Sir" and glaring at me as he went.

He left me speechless. The hairs on my head

stood up like the quills on a perspiring card-sharper.

I was caught; trapped by my own detective. Yes, he had forced the lock of my portmanteau, examined all its contents, and had stolen letters and papers. They were gone—and he had them. I was now his servant—not he, mine. I rang the bell for a glass of brandy, gulped it down, and tumbled into bed.

The next morning Antonio entered my room, as though nothing had happened to disturb the peaceful harmony between master and servant. He brought me water to wash, dusted my boots, and tidied up.

Sandy Hook was now almost in sight, and preparations would be made after breakfast to pack up.

I felt sick; broken up. The very sight of Antonio gave me a headache and acute indigestion. He saw I was ill, and recommended a small bottle of wine. I drank more than half of the wine before breakfast. It gave me Dutch courage to assume a quiet tone of affability, and I told him that I would allow him something before we parted.

He stopped abruptly, with a wave of the hand and a grin, and said, "No, sir! No, sir! We do not part at New York. You brought me here, and where you go I go."

"You won't!" I gasped. "You can't," I lisped.

He came close to me, and hissed, "There is only one place you will go to without me, and that is to prison."

"Prison! Prison!" I yelled. "What the devil do you mean, you dog?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" was his ironical response. "You called me dog, before; so, since I am a dog, beware of my bite. I will go wherever you go, except to

prison. Let us understand each other, Monsieur le Bluey, Monsieur Bluey, the Uncaught Thief."

The colour had left his cheeks, his lips were as pale as death, his eyes danced in obedience to the devil that seemed to be within him. He came closer to me and spoke, not loud, but deep: "Remember Turin? Remember that man's brother," pointing to the upper deck, "whom you killed."

"Killed!" I roared. "You dog!" Could I believe my senses?

"Stop!" he hissed again, "I know all. My mother was the Italian nurse you and his brother employed. She watched every move of yours in dealing with your African drug. You could not deceive my mother. You killed that man; then robbed him. In Paris you cashed the draft for £300 bearing his forged signature. The results of your thieving and robbing—yes, and murdering," he added, lowering his voice, "are secure in the Safe Deposit Box at the Safety Vaults in Westminster. The number of your particular box is 02497. Will you still brave me? Will you still say we must part? Your answer, sir? The moment I touch this bell and ring, you are in irons below, and to-morrow you will be handed over to the police."

For a moment I was dumbfounded. I drank the balance of the champagne. I felt my brain whirl, my senses deadening. My tongue refused to articulate; dizziness and a sort of yellowish vision came before my eyes.

The champagne revived me a little. Facing him, and getting my back to the door, I hissed, "You abominable wretch! Touch that bell, and you are a dead man!"

He smiled, and said quietly, "Rage and passion

will not unlock your Safe Deposit where the dead man's articles of value rest. Shall I call his brother to bear witness to our conversation, or shall we, like sensible men, come to terms?" And he grinned—oh, such a grin!

"Come to terms?" I mused. "Come to terms!" I reflected that any terms were better than a hangman's rope. He had me down, and his foot was on my throat, so to speak. Still, he parleyed, with "Come to terms." I threw myself upon the settee, and assumed the pose of one, wronged.

"You do me an injustice, Antonio. You are mistaken, but ——." I hesitated.

"But," he mockingly echoed, grinning and sneering, "Will you come to terms with me?"

"Yes," I replied, throwing the champagne bottle out of the port-hole. "What do you want?"

"Nothing," he replied, and grinned again.

"Nothing?"

"Nothing," he repeated. "I am of a Society which determines cases like yours, and pronounces sentence. The sentence may condemn you to pay money or to work. It may be that you will be required to pay a fine of £2,000."

"Blackmail?" I suggested.

"Blackmail, if you will," he replied, "It is only a name. But, besides the payment, you may be required to render some service to the cause. Perhaps kill someone—in humanity's cause!"

"Kill someone!" I ejaculated. "Does your Society kill people?"

"Oh, yes. There are several societies in America who undertake to kill people—for a fee!"

"Several societies!" As I silently pondered over the words my spirits rose from zero to blood-heat

point. Several societies in New York and Chicago which kill people for money. Humph! By the powers, I thought, America is not such a bad place as some people would have us believe.

Aloud I asked, "Where is your Society situated, Antonio?"

"All over America."

"What is its name?"

"That you will know, when, blindfolded, you are brought before its President."

"Well, where are the other societies?" I pressed.

"First of all," he said, "do I understand that you agree to the terms that I am to remain with you until our President decides what you must suffer for your crime?"

"Who is your President, and where does he live?" I said, ignoring his persistence.

"That is what you will know hereafter," he doggedly replied. "Do you agree?"

I signified my assent.

"Then," he said, "you are my prisoner until you are brought before our tribunal."

"Your prisoner, be damned!" I cried, mustering up courage.

"Listen to me," he rejoined, and, slowly and solemnly, he added, "Attempt to shunt me, to desert me, or to leave me, or to break faith with me, and I swear to you, by all the devils, that you will be found with a dagger in your heart, and your money and valuables gone. Your name will be blotted entirely out until the day of judgment."

Reluctantly I agreed—and cursed him and the fate and my own vanity that had dragged me into such a mess.

After he had gone, and I had composed myself,

I went on deck to say "Good-bye" to the old ladies and the young girls, who were chattering such nonsense as to give one a headache.

They were all sorry, extremely sorry to lose "Mr. St. Clair." They all hoped he would have good luck and ride many winners. They would be there, and get their little bit "on." It is marvellous how women, especially old women, flock round jockeys.

I was a "boom" on the boat, and I left it, with a sigh of regret, with a heavy heart, and a heavy wallet—heavy with the mugs' money! We dined at the Hotel Astor, and we were soon in the train *en route* for Chicago. Oh! yes, my Antonio was in strict attendance on me. He never let me get out of his sight.

CHAPTER XII.—BLUEY MEETS MARJORIE.

I FELT quite happy when comfortably seated in the luxurious corridor car *en route* for Chicago. We rolled along at American speed, and at Chicago were met by Mr. Hampden's two brothers. One—his age, I should say, nearly forty—was staid and grave. His look pierced you. The other was about twenty-two years of age.

After introductions and mutual congratulations, we boarded a drag, and were driven to the home-stead, a large and commodious house some two miles from Chicago City. The house stood within spacious and well-kept grounds. Everything was up-to-date, and comfort and order seemed to prevail in this modern mansion.

The old mother was waiting in the hall to welcome the travellers. A venerable, kind, benevolent, and simple old lady. She looked the picture of motherly goodness.

After I had been introduced, she led me to a small ante-room. With tears in her eyes, she sobbed, "Oh! Dear, dear Sir, even before the dust is off your clothes, tell me, tell me, what kind of end my poor dear son made? Did he die in peace? Was the minister with him?"

She sat in an easy chair. Seated on her right, I tried, as best I could—amidst hesitations and sighs, interspersed with well-regulated sobs—to tell her of her dear son's happy death—happy for me, as things turned out.

"He died with a minister at his side," I answered—although I knew that there was not a minister in the town at the time. "He died asking for you"—I knew that he died, dead drunk! "He was calling for his mother"—in reality, he was calling for more drink! "He died regretting the past"—the fact was, he died regretting that he could not continue it and keep the pace going!

The good old mother sobbed, and sighed, and sobbed again.

It was a painful interview. Painful, because of the mother's tears and a mother's love, and doubly painful to me, because I was strongly of opinion that I could hear Antonio trying to force the locks of my portmanteaux upstairs, to go through my belongings before I could get away from the dear old lady.

The situation was relieved by the younger brother arriving, and asking the honour of showing me my room.

I did not want asking a second time. I made for that elegant apartment. It was on the right wing, with a heavy verandah in the front, and casement windows overlooking beautiful gardens at the back and side.

Every convenience was at hand. Antonio had already spread out my clothes, dusted my dinner shoes, and made preparations to turn me out spunk and new—just the thing to dine at the table of an American millionaire. He informed me, with a peculiar grin, that he had got fine quarters in the servants' compartments, away in a large building by itself beyond the rear of the kitchen.

For the first time, this devil's imp seemed to be happy, and, when I bade him go and look after his

own comfort, he said, "Master will be happy here. He will be contented; he will leave here a different man." He smiled, showed his yellow teeth, and backed out of the room.

"Leave here a different man!" I murmured. "Perhaps he wants to saw one of my legs off, or, perhaps, I shall leave here without my head, like the lamented St. Dennes. However, I made up my mind not to say "Good-morning!" to the devil—the real one, I mean, not Antonio—until I met him. I was not going to worry further about my valet and his sinister hints as to the future.

When the dinner gong sounded, Master Cecil, the youngest of the family, came to escort me to the table. We first proceeded to the drawing-room, where I was introduced to Miss Marjorie Hampden, a pale-faced girl of about 18 summers. She was about medium height and build. She looked rather thin and worn, but when she laughed, or was amused, her face lighted up as though the electric light was turned on it. She seemed mighty glad to see me, and to chat with me.

During dinner—which was served in a spacious hall some 60 feet long, divided by rich hanging curtains—I devoted all my conversational abilities to the mother and daughter. Only occasionally I spoke to the brothers. The young brother riveted his eyes upon me, and fairly gulped down every word I uttered. Marjorie was deeply interested in my tales of Australian bush life, when our horses were speared by blacks and we stood alone on the edge of a desert with no water within 40 or 50 miles, and to turn back meant certain death by the blacks.

I told them tales of the shearing sheds; the

taking off of the wool from the sheep's backs; the merry song of the shearer; the dry, but smart talk of the rousabout; the jolly boss, with his big pipe full of strong tobacco; the musterers; the drivers; and the hundreds of thousands of sheep on one run. I told them, too, of the kangaroo drives and of the penning-up of emus, like turkeys in a yard.

So the dinner went on. They supped and ate, and I talked, to make an impression. It was the first time I had had the box seat in such society, and if I had to throw a ten, I made up my mind to do it, even with loaded dice. I did it.

I interested the girl—of that I was sure. I interested the good old mother, and I interested young Cecil. The elder brother—the grave and silent one—eyed me every now and then with a curl of disdain on his lips. I think he read part of my thoughts. "The thief considers every bush an officer."

Dinner over, we adjourned to the drawing-room.

"You smoke, Mr. St. Clair? Pray don't let us detain you."

"Oh, not at all." I said. "I always prefer ladies' company to smoking. Anyhow, I am not an inveterate smoker."

Miss Marjorie chirruped in with, "Pray do have a smoke on the verandah, with my brothers, but only on condition that you will not be long. You will come back and finish those delightful stories about dear Australia."

"Oh! yes," chipped in Ma, smiling, "If you don't, we shall not sleep a wink all night."

I bowed, and, pulling out my gold cigar case, walked to the verandah, young Cecil following.

Cecil greatly admired my cigar case, which

had emblazoned on it the initials of St. Clair, in blood rubies. I explained that it had been presented to me by the famous Count Van Voozski for winning a classical race in Austria. In point of fact, it was one I stole from a drunken lord in Paris.

We were soon back in the drawing-room, to join the ladies. Of course, the conversation opened about Australia. They knew nothing about the country; so I had the subject all to myself.

I declared, with some eloquence, that Australia was the greatest country God ever gave to man, with sunshine all the year, flowers in profusion perfuming the air, and song birds simply darkening the light by the density of their feathered flocks, and—I might have added—with its beer engines going day and night.

“But,” interposed Mrs. Hampden, who had been listening attentively and nodding her head approvingly from time to time, “I have read in the papers, Mr. St. Clair, that you have had dreadful droughts.”

“Oh,” I rejoined, with a smile, “that is simply an interposition by Providence, you see. If it were all rain, all sunshine, all wool, and all mutton, we should have far too much of everything.”

“Oh! I see,” she said, “of course, you would. Happy thought. Providence is very good.”

I quite agreed. Providence was doing splendidly.

“Then, again, Providence is very careful about bushfires,” I added. “If the grass is long and dry, a bush fire comes and denudes the country.”

“Like our prairies? Like our prairies?”

“Yes, like your prairies, of course, like your prairies. Happy thought.”

From such generalities, the conversation drifted into narrower channels, with plenty of detail. Of course, I was called upon to give the family history of the St. Clairs.

"My mother," I explained to Mrs. Hampden, "was a great woman, in many respects. She was always before the public in one capacity or another. She was almost what you Americans term 'a public character.' She was a great authority on the drink question, and used to debate, with vigour and force, the vexed question of opening hotels early in the morning and keeping them open all Sunday. She was like the lady you Americans boast of—Mrs. Carrie Nation, I think her name was—the bar smasher. Well, my ma could smash two bars to Carrie Nation's one any day. I have seen my ma smash a bar up, turn the landlord out of the bar, hunt his family round the next street, and then come back and take possession and defy the police to remove her."

"What a strong character your mother must have been," said Mrs. Hampden, with widely-opened eyes.

"Strong!" I exclaimed, emphatically. "Strength is no name for it. She lost all her time and all her money over this drink question. Her forcefulness on this question resulted, on more than one occasion, in the Governor himself waiting upon her and asking her to make a statement. So did the King's doctor. But she refused; yes, she refused, poor soul."

"A statement, Mr. St. Clair. A statement to hand down to posterity?"

"Well," I answered, mysteriously, "I don't know about posterity. They wanted a statement to file;

I suppose that would be handed down to someone."

"Very probably, very probably," agreed Mrs. Hampden.

"You see," I blundered on, "whatever my poor, dear, departed mother did, she did thoroughly. That was one thing about my mother, poor soul; the Lord rest her."

"Amen," whispered Marjorie, piously.

"Whenever she was about, there was no mistaking her presence. She had a happy ending. All the neighbours sang her to rest; indeed, one woman, who lived in the next park to our park—of course, I meant the public park—often said that she would walk ten miles any day in the week to put flowers on my mother's grave."

"Oh, how nice," quoth Marjorie. "What a nice disposition."

"And I assure you all the folks round our domain—the Sydney domain—had one firm set opinion about ma and her strong capabilities on the drink question."

"It's simply lovely," interposed dear Mrs. Hampden, "to hear a young man speak so well of his dead mother as you do. And," she added, "your father, Mr. St. Clair. Is he alive?"

"Oh, no," I rejoined. "My father is dead too, Madam. The poor man had a sudden ending. He passed out of this life instantaneously. It was a throat complaint, and his death was a very great shock to the bystanders—I mean standers by his bedside," I hastily stammered, but did not add that the reporters gave a graphic account of pa's ending.

"And your brothers and sisters, Mr. St. Clair. What do they do?"

I was getting tired of this, and in an absent-minded, abstract sort of a way, said, "Oh, they are battling."

"Battling?" she repeated, inquiringly, "Battling! I have never heard the term."

"Oh, I mean," I said confusedly, "I mean, well, really I don't know what I do mean."

"Oh," warbled sweet Marjorie, "I suppose they belong to the battlefield. They fight battles for their country?"

"Yes, yes." I grabbed the suggestion as a drowning man will grab to the side of an ironclad. "They are soldiers, you understand."

"But your sister is not a soldier."

"Oh, no, she's not a soldier; she's a soldiers' nurse."

"How delightful," Marjorie chirruped. "How intensely interesting. We know more of Australia since your visit here, Mr. St. Clair, than ever we knew before. But tell me, Mr. St. Clair, who manages your ranch or station, with that great number of sheep on it, when your family are all so patriotically engaged working for King and Country?"

I attempted to say something—I don't know what. I was yarded up properly, but sweet Marjorie let down the rails and I jumped out of the yard. "I suppose," she said, "the trustees?"

"That's it, that's it," I said as cool as a cucumber off the ice. "I always forget the names of those fellows. I hate trustees."

"So do I," said Marjorie, "my trustees are fearfully disagreeable."

"Have you trustees, too? Then you have my deepest sympathy."

"It is very unjust of Marjorie to say one disparaging word of her trustees," interposed Mrs. Hampden. "They are kind, and thoughtful, and honest gentlemen. You see, Mr. St. Clair, you have been good enough to tell us so much of your family history that I am sure you will not mind listening to just a teeny, teeny bit of ours. When poor Marjorie's father died—his end came, poor dear, of a racking cough that settled on his chest; he got it whilst buying pork on the hoof—when he died he left Marjorie two hundred thousand pounds in trust, two hundred thousand pounds-worth of bonds when she marries, and a fifth interest in our firm—so, altogether, Marjorie is worth nearly six hundred thousand pounds, and the trustees very properly and very rightly keep a strong hand on her interests, and will not allow her to squander or waste one cent. piece of it."

I gave a little "Oh!" but, like the parrot outside the Hotel Astor, I was thinking very hard. Six hundred thousand pounds! She is simple, child-like, and innocent. I thought she would be a baby in my hands if I could once get my grip on her. But she was a shy bird, and if the mother was an old goose she looked mightily smart over her goslings. It was a game worth playing for, though. Six hundred thousand pounds to nothing—long odds—and the play seemed easy.

With a gracious "Good-night!" we parted. Young Cecil insisted on showing me to my room. He wanted a yarn about the Australian bush, the blacks, the kangaroos, and the sheep stations, and insisted that I should tell him the best way to win a "Melbourne Cup," but finding Antonio there I dismissed the lad with promises for the morrow.

Antonio was half, or three-quarters, drunk. I asked him if he had been to the town to see his master. He clung to the bed post, and did not reply, but said, "Have you, my master, ever read Paine's 'Rights of Man'?"

I said "No. Is that the gentleman who lived a pig and died a hog?"

"Well," hiccoughed Antonio, "Don't you think every man should have the right to work. Do you believe in the equality of man?" he proceeded, hanging on to the bed post.

I told him I did.

"Then," he said, "it is the survival of the fittest," and he squinted to such an extent that I feared his eyes were going to bed without him.

"It is a matter," I replied, "of survive as best you can, and keep out of gaol."

"My life is not my own," was the startling reply. "Nor is your life your own, for from to-night they both belong to the dark Council of the Black Hand."

Having given me this cheerful piece of information, he staggered through the open casement to the verandah, gained the back stairs, and disappeared into the midnight darkness.

I paused, and listened. He was gone. Barring and bolting the doors, I lighted a cigarette, and for some time sat lost in thought. When I awoke from my reverie, my mind was set as tightly and closely as my firm teeth. This man—a lunatic at large, an assassin, a Black Hand, the plaything and the dupe of clever and cunning men who were secure in their cellars—he must be got rid of, at any cost.

The lights out, I sprang into bed, and was soon asleep, dreaming of Marjorie, sweet little Marjorie. I thought I held her in my arms, that

she was my wife, and that we were in Sydney—dear old Sydney, with its hooks and its crooks—and were happy. I thought I was relating to her the sudden death of those two eminent detectives, Michael John and Hector MacLean, and what with their blessed death and my blessed marriage with the woman I loved, all was happiness and all was bliss. My slumber was disturbed by a knock and the words, "Coffee, sir."

It was morning—bright, shining, fresh, and lovely. The open casement admitted the fragrant air into the darkened room, accompanied as it was by the song birds' delightful notes. I sipped my coffee, dressed, and sauntered into the lovely gardens.

Sweet Marjorie was there, with her garden gloves on, clipping the blooming dew-bedecked flowers to grace the breakfast table. How pure, how simple, how fresh she looked! What fate awaited her? What joys, as yet untasted! What tears, as yet unshed! There she stood, in all her innocence; in all her maiden glory, budding into beautiful womanhood.

Women are the true upholders and aristocrats of the human family. Yet they are expensive playthings. Their caprices, whims, fancies, and loves are as contrary and opposed to each other as the dividing poles of the earth. The majority of the sex love boldness in man, and enjoy the proximity of danger if they are by the side of the individual they love. In love and in danger they are brave—brave to a fault. None refuse to be courted, praised, or loved.

Even Mary Queen of Scots—the most beautiful woman on earth in her day—was only happy when

in the arms of her murderous lover, the ruffian and blood-thirsty Bothwell. Elizabeth—the greatest Queen that England had seen before Queen Victoria—loved the dancing and dandified Hatton, and would not be denied his company. Why, then, should my heart fail me in dealing with this child, this small flower of the human garden, this caged love-dove. I determined to try to woo and win her—yes, if necessary, even with loaded dice.

“Good-morning, Mr. St. Clair.”

I returned the salutation, with a compliment on Marjorie’s industry, and declared she could teach the flowers to bud and bloom to perfection. We chatted and talked in this vein of nonsense, she blushing and smiling and seemed quite happy.

The breakfast bell had gone; so we sauntered to the verandah. On the way she said seriously, “I hope you won’t forget your promise, Mr. St. Clair, to tell us to-night more about Australia, that glorious land watched over by the Southern Cross. I was so interested, and am afraid my brothers will take you away all to themselves into the smoking room. Some of our friends dine here to-night; so you must not desert old friends for new. Now you will remember, won’t you? I am sure you will not forget.” Then she added, “The Chief of Police of Chicago is my mother’s oldest friend, and he and his wife and daughter will be with us to-night.”

I bowed and smiled, but my speech was gone. “The Chief of Police,” I mused. “Why the devil can’t some of the Black Hand ruffians kill him?” And I sighed for some country where police were not.

CHAPTER XIII.—BID FOR MARJORIE.

LATE in the afternoon I was chatting with Marjorie, when a young girl came tripping along, with a light step and a merry laugh.

"Ah! me! Mademoiselle" she exclaimed, "Where have you been, you little truant? You sly-boots. Oh, naughty, naughty." Then, noticing me, she stopped, shyly.

Marjorie smiled and, turning to me, said, "Mr. St. Clair, allow me to introduce you to my maid, Jeanette."

I raised my hat, and bowed.

Jeanette shyly curtsied. She was a beautiful brunette. One of Italy's choicest daughters. I marked her down in the tablets of my brain as an individual to be reckoned with when I was working out my calculations to grab Marjorie and her dollars.

I left the happy girls, to dress for dinner. It was to be served sumptuously in the long, heavily-furnished dining room. The guests met in the drawing-room, where sherry and bitters were handed round, and formal introductions took place.

The Chief of the Police, his wife, and his daughter, and the local preacher, the Rev. Mr. Mugway, with his wife and his boorish son, were my fellow guests.

The boss of the police was a tall, well-built man—nearing the sixties. His hair was iron-grey, and his moustache matched it. His bronzed counten-

ance was open and frank, but stern, and lit with piercing, grey eyes that always seemed to say, when they were looking at you, "I know you, my boy. You are mine. I will deal with you." At least, that was the impression he made upon me. Perhaps it was merely the imagination of the brain—a thief's brain.

As we sipped our sherry, the man of law and order said to me, in a half-confidential whisper, "I think I have seen you before, Mr. St. Clair."

"No," I replied, "I have never before visited America; so it is impossible we have ever met."

"I hardly think I can be mistaken," he pressed, searching me with his cold, cruel, grey eyes. "I would swear, on my last dollar, that I have seen your face somewhere."

I diverted the conversation by putting up a yarn on him as to how I won the Imperial Stakes in Austria for the Grand Duke of Gattenburg, the name of the horse I rode being, I said, Royal Insanity. I minutely described the Duke—whom I had never seen, and who was at the moment in a "dilly house." "It was in a great race—the Duke presented me with this diamond and emerald ring," I explained, and added that my photo had been in illustrated papers all over the world.

The Police Chief smiled, "Ah, that is where I have seen it, Mr. St. Clair. I knew I could not have been mistaken. That is where I have seen it." And he slapped his hand on my shoulder, nearly breaking my blade-bone. I need hardly say that the illustrated paper in which he saw my photo was the Police Gazette.

"There is a jockey here from Australia," he continued. "His name is Talker—Scotty Talker they

call him. He is staying at the Grand Hotel, and puts on quite an over-supply of 'dog.' The week after next he is going to ride the horse of a friend of mine at the Cincinatti races, but don't you back him, as the owner informs me he will not be trying. He is keeping it for the big event in New York. If he were trying, nothing could stop him. He is a beautifully bred, and is doing splendid work."

I noted where Scotty was staying, and made up my mind to see him, and also the horse that was *not* trying. I thought a consideration might liven him up, and, if so, it would be a good opportunity to turn in an honest penny in the land of the potted pig and canned tripe.

Dinner being served, we trooped into the dining room. I sat next to Marjorie—to her mother's satisfaction. I think they looked upon me as an over-grown, rather stupid, big boy, to whom they wanted to be civil for a week or two, and then dismiss and forget him. I chuckled to myself when I considered what a nice hawk these good, easy, pious folk had allowed to roost in the quietude of their family nest, to have unrestrained access to chat with their unprotected daughter. It was lovely.

The conversation at the table drifted on to that nightmare, "Socialism," which at that time was unhinging Society's brain-box, and sending the well-bred folk, the rich folk, the want-to-be-well-bred folk, and the want-to-be-rich folk off their "nuts."

The Rev. Mr. Parson set the ball going, by complimenting the head of the police on the timely arrest of certain Socialistic leaders.

The officer smiled, in a casual sort of way, and remarked, with many ambiguous nods of his head, that other arrests would follow, and that the vile

dregs of Society were not going to rule the country—not quite, for sure. Ghee!

“What is Socialism?” queried Mrs. Hampden, in her blindest manner, as she daintily toyed with a rose that had fallen from a table epergne.

The parson was quickly off the mark with his reply: “Its leaders say that Socialism is the ownership of all capital or means of production and the absorption of all private associations by the State, but we say that it is the normal enemy of Christian charity. Socialism is not an agitation for the betterment of the poor—it is a revolutionary system directly calculated to turn the world upside down and throw mankind back into a state of barbarism.”

I concurred, with a suppressed “Hear, hear.” “Keep in with the parson, Bluey,” I thought.

“Dear me! Dear me!” exclaimed the ladies. “How dreadful!”

“I do not agree with you at all,” said George. “To my mind Socialism is the only means whereby the poor, and lonely, and helpless may get a taste of the sweets of this world.”

“How strange for you, George, to support such a doctrine,” said the apologetic mother.

“I support anything, mater, that will be the means of bettering the condition of the masses.”

“Well,” she said, “your father was much against Socialism, if I remember rightly.”

“That I cannot help,” continued George. “My father was making money by the barrel, and it mattered little to him, good easy man, how he made it, so long as he did make it.”

“Well, he made it honestly,” the mother retorted, with some indignation.

"Honestly, of course," replied George, "according to the hand-bible of your modern capitalist. When the Franco-Prussian War was raging, don't forget, my dear mother, that my good father, with several others, joined in to corner tinned meats and pickled pork. They sent the prices up, more than double. I suppose that was all right, according to Christian doctrine and Christian teaching. It would have been all right if the wages of the workers had been raised proportionately, but, instead of that, the wages were reduced, and to this day I blush for the doings of the 'ring,' or trust, of which my respected parent was a member."

"And," George went on, after recovering his breath, "it is quoted by Trithemius that whosoever buys up corn, meat, or wine, in order to drive the price up, and thereby amasses money at the cost of others, is, according to the laws of God, no better than a common criminal. How many criminals, then, may, I ask, flourish in this land of plenty and of poverty? Why, according to that doctrine, the place is full of them, to over-flowing."

The Police Chief now got a word in, as the liveried waiter whipped his empty fish plate from the table. Socialism, according to the Chief, 'was based on the supposed rights of man. "Its god," said he, "is the State. Its last end is earthly employment for all. The object of its worship is production."

"I say," the officer of the law continued, with emphasis, "Socialism takes an entirely false view of human life. It looks only to the physical well-being and comfort of the man; it considers him a mere animal, with pleasure as his chief god. Bebel, quoting Heine, says, 'Leave heaven to the

angels and the sparrows,' and bids his followers seek heaven on earth. The rights of God are ignored; in fact, the very existence of God is called into question. Socialism, according to some of its leading exponents, is not logical unless it is purely secularistic. Their paper, 'Appeal to Reason,' says, 'Religious dogma is the survival of the childhood of the race.' Henry George says, 'Modern Socialism is without religion, and its tendency is atheistical.' Herr Bebel boldly declares that Christianity and Socialism stand to each other as fire does to water."

"You are quite right, quite right," intoned the Rev. Mr. Mugway. "Why, bless us and save us," he continued, with his goggled eyes, first staring at one and then at another, "in 1871 Schall said, 'We'll open war against God, because God is the greatest evil in the world.' In '75 Liebknecht wrote, 'It is our duty as Socialists to root out the faith in God, with all our might; nor is any one worthy of the name who does not concentrate himself to the spread of atheism.' Engles proclaims, from the housetops, 'We have simply done with God.' Proudhon says, 'There will be no peace until the last king is strangled with the bowels of the last priest.' They are all atheists—all."

"A pretty state of affairs, my friends," added the parson vigorously, "would take place in the world, and especially in our beloved America, were such fiends incarnate to once get a hold of the reins of power. I call them a plague—yes, with the head of the Church of Rome, I call them an 'accursed brood.'"

"If all of these things are true," observed Mrs. Hampden, in an alarmed tone, "the very name of

Socialism should not be mentioned by any respectable community."

At this point the parson's wife expressed her opinion. She thought that God should blast the rebels with His lightning.

Perhaps she saw the time coming when her old man would be able to raise his salary.

Meanwhile, the parson's son was whacking into the pudding and the sandwich-cakes laden with raspberry jam.

George was not to be easily silenced by the flow of rhetoric. From his place at the head of the table he again took up the revolutionary arguments.

"Why," he asked, "should a great body of social reformers be condemned for the wild talk of some half dozen extremists?"

Without giving anyone time to answer the question he proceeded: "Socialism is not atheistic; it is not hostile to Christianity, any more than it is to Buddhism or Mohammedanism; it does not concern itself about religion, but, distinctly and directly, declares religion to be a private matter, to be left to the convenience of the individual."

"I think it is a dreadful thing," retorted his mother, "for a set of idle nobodies who won't work—and, if they can help it, won't let anyone else work—to take away the gains of thrifty and industrious people."

"Wealth, honourably acquired," said the parson, trying to look wise, "must be respected. Capital, employed in industrial enterprises, provides work for the masses and gives them an honourable existence. If the wealthy man is a true Christian, he will consider himself the steward of the things he possesses and use them for the benefit of others, and especi-

ally for the benefit of the Church. It is to the Church that the masses must look, for the Church is the Church of the rich and the poor alike. If the masses look to the Church, there will be no strikes."

"How, then, in the name of all that is reasonable," asked George, with energy, "are the masses to get redress for their poverty and misery if they abandon the strike as a weapon in favour of unadulterated Church teachings? The Church teaches them to give no heed to the morrow, to lay not up for themselves treasures on earth, to cultivate poverty of spirit, meekness, forgiveness, to exchange all the good things of this world for a harp and a halo in the next—of which they possess no knowledge—to meet armed enemies like tame mice. On the other hand, Socialism bids them be up and doing, to pay careful heed to the morrow, to meet force with force, to oppose the organisation of the brutal strength of capitalism, and to use the strike as a weapon to secure higher pay and better serve their ends. The strike is, in this country, the workers' only weapon."

"But what about Congress?" queried the oleaginous parson. "Have the people not votes? Why disregard the ballot box, eh?"

"Congress!" said George, biting his lip as if in disgust, "Our Monarchs of Industry own Congress, body and soul. They control both Municipal and State legislatures. The so-called candidates of the people are the candidates of bosses, and wirepullers, and Tammany. We have no sceptred kings in this country; nor do we want them, nor would we have them. But we have gold kings, we have silver kings, railroad kings, oil

kings, rubber kings, pork, beer, and whisky kings, and tinned-meat kings—all kings, who put their trust in the power of money, and rule with the purse and squeeze the people all the time. Money manipulates Congress and Conventions, and buys up votes, candidates, and members with as much ease as you would buy a bag of potatoes on the highway. Incidentally—with due respect to your cloth, Sir, and present company excepted—money buys Churches and their Pastors.”

The Parson lifted up his eyes, as if shocked, and was silent. The Chief of Police laughed and said, “George, George. I believe you will wind up a thorough-going Socialist. Any day I expect to see you on the stump preaching the doctrine that God is dead in order that man may live. Isn’t that the cant phrase? I shall fully expect you soon to be quoting, with approval, the terrible words of Swinburne.”

Soon afterwards the ladies rose, and Marjorie whispered to me, “You are not going to stop here drinking wine, Mr. St. Clair, are you? Men are all selfish. They hunt us women away when the wine comes in, and it is only at that point, I think, that the conversation becomes interesting.”

I assured her that I would leave the table in a second or two, and saunter on to the verandah to enjoy a cigarette in the cool night, and if she could steal out I would tell her more about Australia.

She said, “You are very good,” and, as she moved her chair to depart, I rose to assist her. As though by accident, her thin cold hand rested on my wrist; and, while it rested there, she said, “You won’t be long, will you?”

I smiled and bowed obedience, and she went into the drawing room.

The argument at the dinner table still went on, the talk rising louder and louder as the wine went down.

George cracked nuts and jokes at the same time. He was well on the parson's track, and never let him get too far ahead, despite the fact that the respected pulpit preacher thumped the table, to emphasise his points, until the glasses and the crockery rattled.

Making excuse, I strolled on to the verandah, at the extreme end of which Marjorie and her maid were seated. I joined them, and told them funny stories of bush life, made up as I went along.

A chilly breeze springing up, I casually suggested that the maid should obtain a wrap for her young mistress. When the daughter of Italy had gone, with mischievous twinkles in her large dark eyes, I carelessly edged near to Marjorie, until we were almost touching each other. I spoke of lands far away, my motor drives, the sights I had seen in London, the parties at St. James's Palace. I also spoke of Rome, of the Vatican, its pictures and its marvels. I gave her the history of Michael Angelo, omitting, of course, the naughty parts.

When I had finished, she admired my diamond and emerald ring. "Let me see it," she pleaded.

I held out my hand for her to take the ring off. She hesitated for a moment—only a moment—then commenced to remove the ring from my finger. I tightened my grasp on her delicate hand, saying, jokingly, "Now you are my prisoner." She blushed in the moonlight. I imprisoned her hand.

It was the first squeeze, the first fatal touch.

The young unfledged pigeon had commenced to play with the hawk. Would the hawk win?

Poor Marjorie! Well do I remember, most vividly, the irresistible impulses that drew me to her on that fatal night. As the maid came tripping along the verandah with the cloak, I said, hurriedly, to Marjorie, "Will you come for a short motor-drive to-morrow? I will take you in my new car."

Again blushing, she answered, "I should be very glad if mamma will allow me; I have done very little motoring."

Jeanette now joined us, and it was arranged to ask the mother's permission to go motoring on the morrow. As it was getting late and rather chilly, we proceeded to the drawing-room where, after coffee, a general "Good-night!" followed.

As we were about to leave, the Chief of Police promised to send one of his trusty men with me to see the sights of Chicago, in the underground cellars, where, he told us, murders are plotted by the flickering light of a candle. At this we laughed merrily, and parted.

On reaching my room I found Antonio there, ready to undress me. He looked sulky, and I think he had been drinking. In a half-sort of a grunt, he said, "Vel, vat they know about Socialism? Noding!" Then, half-mumbling to himself, he added, "Socialism is the true key to true happiness." He had evidently been listening to the dinner conversation.

"Well," I asked, "What do you know about it?"

His face lightened up, and he replied, "I come from the birthplace of Socialism—a country which Kingcraft and God-worship have ruined. The priests and the nobles have eaten the very heart"

and vitals out of the nation. It is a country where a fine lady's lap dog will be housed and fed better than nine-tenths of the families of the toilers."

"Some day, not far off," he proceeded, with a dark and threatening look, "some day you will see blood run, and you will know how much the people have suffered. Already, I hear the rumble of the drum of the revolution. Already, the mine has been laid which will destroy for ever the cleric's and the aristocracy's influence over the people. The Church has dwarfed, and damned, and well nigh ruined the people it snivels over. Life is worse to-day than ever it was for the masses."

"How do you know all these things, Antonio?" I queried.

"Know them! My Socialistic leaders know everything. Socialism is the alpha and omega of the philosophy of correct living."

Antonio grinned and exhibited his wretched, yellow teeth. But he had more on his mind than Socialism that night. As I was preparing to get into bed, he leaned over me and hissed, "You talk privately with the daughter of this house, Monsieur. Beware! that girl is pledged."

"Pledged!" I echoed. "Pledged to whom?"

He hesitated a moment. Then, again in a hissing voice, he replied, and his words made my flesh creep, "Pledged to my Society, the Black Hand. She must answer for the sins of her father, who was our mortal enemy!"

A meaning look, a deadly dart from his cruel eye as he switched the light off at the door—and he was gone.

"Beware!" "Pledged!" "Black Hand!" "Mortal enemy!" I muttered, as I rolled my hot

head upon my restless pillow. But my last thoughts that night were of Marjorie. "The game has begun; the game has begun; the hawk is in the dove-cot." Thus, I hushed myself to sleep, to dream of Marjorie—and her fortune.

CHAPTER XIV. — JEANETTE'S SECRET.

I WAS now getting quite settled in my new home. I was just the thing, almost one of the family. My happiness seemed to be nearing the highest pinnacle. The one black cloud in my sky of content was Antonio. He spied on Marjorie, Jeanette, and me, with remorseless persistency. I wished him dead.

I had been nearly a month in the house, and made no show of shifting. The good old mother, with true Christian confidence, fully trusted me with Marjorie, with whom I remained on the most friendly terms. Still, she was well watched by Jeanette, and Antonio never seemed to lose sight of us. I spread myself out to be ultra-kind and considerate to Jeanette. I even presented her, on the quiet, with a fifty-dollar bill. One word against me to the mother from Jeanette, and I was gone, yes, gone for ever. She was sharp, clever, and full of vivacity, but at times sad and wore a far-off, pained expression on her beautiful face. Something was troubling her. I decided to know her secret, and hold her by it. It would be easier and safer than making love to her. I hated making love to those who were pretty but had no funds.

We had spent the last two weeks motoring and rambling about the City and surrounding district. but Jeanette was always at Marjorie's elbow.

One night I took Jeanette to the Opera House. "Maritana" was being sung. Marjorie did not like this. She was piqued, in a childish

sort of way, and went to bed with a sick-headache. It was part of the work of a money-hunting artist to make Marjorie jealous, ever so little, and so divide the women in their confidences.

Returning from the opera, we decided to do the journey on foot, it being a beautiful night, one of Nature's grandest.

I invited Jeanette to tell me her history.

"Oh! no, monsieur. No; not yet. My history is the one pain in my poor heart. Some day, monsieur, I may tell you all, and make you shudder—perhaps avoid me for ever. I like your genius, frankness, and your manliness, and may tell you all, and ask your assistance to that beloved land of yours, Australia. Now, I am bound, hand and foot. I am in bondage, body and soul. To move, or to speak, or to complain might mean death. I should love to fly to Australia where the accursed Black Hand has no home—it's the hand of the devil himself."

She spoke with vehemence. Her blood ran hot, and her disturbed soul was reflected in her beautiful face. The situation on the lonely road homewards, the stillness of the night, and the faint rays of the moonbeams lent interest and enchantment to Jeanette's smothered history.

I determined to fathom her.

The next morning Marjorie did not come down for breakfast. Jeanette said, laughingly, that she was sulky. I decided to give her a full dose of her own medicine, and, therefore, quitted the house to spend the day with Scotty Talker, with whom I had already struck up an acquaintance. I found him lolling on his bed, having spent the best part of the night in drinking and debauch.

He grinned a, "Glad-to-see you, Bluey St.

Clair!" And then asked, "What about our lurk with the moke? I am to race on Saturday. To-day's Wednesday. It's like picking money up. He'll win, sure. Ghee! He can foot it on the track in his work. He's a beautiful bred colt, sired by the King's horse, Persimmon. So, you see, it's only a matter of terms with me. I'll be the party on top. I want 2,000 dollars as my cut. Cash up, or shut up. You take the market. He'll be about 50 to 1. The dogs are barking about him not being a trier. I suppose you won't rook me. Are you up to silver? What's your game here, Bluey? You seem to have tons of clobber (clothes) and enough sparklers (diamonds) to start a jewellery shop."

Not heeding his remarks—for he was always a silly Angora goat—we used to call him dotty, not Scotty—I said, "2,000 dollars to you is a bet. You must trust me. I'll pay nothing before I win. But how about it if they 'stuff' the horse on you the night before?"

"Crumbs!" he laughed. "It would be blue murder, wouldn't it? Oh! I can get at the innocent that's looking after him. He'd pawn one of his legs and burn the ticket for me. I'll fix him up not to overfeed the horse the night before. I'll not give him the strength of our game. I'll say it might ruin him to race on a full stomach, and we shall want him for the hereafter in New York. Leave it to me, Bluey, it's the surest thing on earth, except death. I'll fix him. He's a dead mug, and a few dollars and a tear round amongst the girls is all he wants."

I left it to him.

There was a great stir about the races at the home of the Hampdens. Marjorie was all flurry and bustle. Jeanette was excited. So was Ma, who had

been only once to a horse race meeting in her life, and, therefore, was all aglow with the prospect of a full day's enjoyment of that kind.

My 35-horse-power motor was requisitioned. I drove the car, which contained Ma, Marjorie, Jeanette, George, and the Head of the Police. It was a blazing hot day, nearly as sultry as the job I was putting up to get money.

My race was the second. Thirteen starters (unlucky 13) were left on the card, and were preparing to strip for the event of the day. Scotty had gone off to see the rider of Stars and Stripes. It was said to have a chance; so it would be better fixed up. He returned, saying that the boy on top would agree to anything. He was a dead innocent, and would wait for his "sugar" until the race was over. The most dangerous horse was a big chestnut named Westward Ho, which was owned by a flash cattle buyer who bragged to the clouds, and smoked and drank whiskey cocktails from daybreak until bedtime. He had told the youngster who had the mount on Westward Ho that his neck was as good as cracked if he did not win.

Scotty heard the threat; so, promptly brought the boy to me for sympathy and advice. Finally, I arranged that Westward Ho should be "pulled" in the interest of Prince Simon (my fancy). I gave the youngster 100 dollars on account. He promptly returned the money to me, and asked me to "invest the blankety lot on Prince Simon."

"Now," he said, "I'll hold him if I have to tear Westward's head off to stop him do it. Prince Simon must win, as all our bank is on that neddy." The youngster winked, spat some tobacco juice over his

left shoulder, and departed to weigh out for the race—and weigh his boss in for the stakes.

I then went into the ring to back Prince Simon. He was 20 to 1. I lobbed a 500-dollar bill into the hand of one of the bookies, saying, in reply to his yelling, "4 to 1, bar none: 10 to 1 runners: any price outsiders." "Here you are, 20 to 1 Prince Simon."

The bookie, who smelt strongly of fried fish and pickled cucumbers, glared at me with his bloodshot eyes, grabbed the bill, gave me a ticket, and went on howling, "4 to 1, bar one. Any price, outsiders!"

Gliding quickly through the ring, one of the oddsvendors' brigade—who, I was informed, had graduated from New York Bowery gutters, through gaols and hothouses to his present eminently safe position—was making very free with Prince Simon's name, and offering 30 to 1. "Is nobody going to back this well-bred horse?" he yelled.

"I'm with you," I replied, planking a 500-dollar bill into his dingy, be-diamonded hand. He grabbed it, with the same energy that the fiends in the lower regions are said to grab ice cream. I was finished. It was all I could afford. One hundred dollars went on for the boy on top—Scotty; another for the kid who was stopping Stars and Stripes. I then made my way to where the ladies were, and persuaded them all to back Prince Simon.

"He's dead," said George. "He has not got the winning dope. He's dead to the world!"

"He's not dead," I replied, knowing that Scotty was *now* weighed out, and that change of jockeys was impossible. "The boy on him would not ride him dead. My tip is that he'll win from end to end."

George collected the dollars from his mother, Marjorie, and Jeanette, and we went into the ring to invest the money for the "lydies."

Prince Simon had shortened, but 20's and 25's might be obtained by looking for it. George planked down 200 dollars, on my further assuring him that the horse was right. The Chief of Police asked my advice what to back. I put him on to Prince Simon as a hot and strong pot, and assured him of the boy's honesty. The Chief rushed into the ring with a 100-dollar bill. Twenties was the best he could get. We now conferred, and it was decided that George should interview the stewards to get them to warn Scotty that his mount would be watched, and, if any tricks were observed, out he would go in the cold for life. This was all Scotty wanted—an excuse for livening his "princeship" up. The whisper got about, as the jockeys mounted, that Prince Simon was after the big end of the money, was on the job, and not in the bag. The stewards, after warning Scotty and getting his assurance that he would win from start to finish, rushed the market, with the result that Prince Simon saw two's at the post.

The excitement amongst our party was running warm, as they watched the different horses and the different colours at the post. At last a yell went up like a cannon roar, "They're off! They're off!" And off they were, Prince Simon laying second, with a very strong hold, Stars and Stripes in the lead, and a chestnut (I forget its name) on the outside. On, on, they came, the dust rising in great clouds behind them. The same order was maintained—bar one or two, who were far back. Prince Simon still held his position second,

with Stars and Stripes in the lead. With the big chestnut on the outside, they swept into the straight. "Stars and Stripes wins," was proclaimed by thousands of voices. "Prince Simon can't get through." The chestnut now closed on Stars and Stripes, and fired him on the rails. This stopped any passage being left for Prince Simon. "He can't get through! He's done!" yelled thousands of frantic spectators. Now they were at the distance. It was a designing piece of work on the part of the rider of the chestnut. He was determined to pocket our horse, and fight the finish out with Stars and Stripes.

When they were within 50 yards of the winning post my heart gave a leap, and thousands and thousands of people gave a frantic yell as the jockey on Stars and Stripes raised the whip, and, bringing it down with terrific force, deliberately cut the chestnut right across the eyes with such fury that the animal swerved, almost stopped, and bored out to avoid a second dose from the whip, whilst Stars and Stripes immediately pulled out from the rails, and its jockey screeched, "Come on, Scotty! For Gawd's sake, win!"

Scotty had seen the opening—and, pulling his horse together, took advantage of it with a flash, and was through. It was a close shave. Prince Simon won by a neck from Stars and Stripes, the chestnut fell back to nowhere. Such a yell, such a tumult of roars, I never heard before. Wild were the execrations and frothy the imprecations on the jockeys!

We all looked for trouble, but none came, and no red flag went up. I then passed out and was joyously received by our party. The chestnut came

into the enclosure last; his eyes were bleeding, his sight was impaired. The jockey on Stars and Stripes was detained in the Committee Room, where an investigation was being held. The thing was so bold, so daring, so flagrant, and the howling and hooting from without was so strong that even the stewards could not refuse to notice it.

I sent Scotty to tell the youthful person that he had won 2,600 dollars, which I intended to make up to 3,000 dollars. The stewards warned off the youngster for life—*yes, life!* It was, indeed, a serious sentence. I proposed to give him a testimonial, but the thing fell through. Mr. Socialist George and the Policeman, both of whom had won heavily, simply shrugged their shoulders. "Hold on to what you've got" was their motto. As all our party were heavy winners, I was a great boom. They wanted my advice on the next race, but I considered it wise to get out of the way.

As Marjorie and her mother had gone to the extreme end of the enclosure, I escorted Jeanette to a snug nook for tea, where I might learn her history, on the quiet. I had no interest in any of the other races that were to follow. My interest was Marjorie's maid.

CHAPTER XV.—JEANETTE'S STORY.

THE game I was playing was to first secure the maid, then the mistress, and then the dollars.

We secured a special retreat, a nook overgrown with ivy and gay foliage. The place was a charming fairy-bower, hid away from the mad bustle of the mad crowd—mad for dollars.

When tea was served, I opened fire on Jeanette, who was delighted with her win that day. But, when I pressed her, her heart became sad.

"Ah, do not ask me, Monsieur," she said. "My story can be of no interest to you. The world is curious, but always unkind."

I promised to protect her.

She reflected, hesitated, and said: "If I make a confidant of you, Monsieur, you may, in a weak moment, tell Miss Marjorie. Ah! now the blood mounts your cheek. You love her." And she sighed. "I think she loves you, but she is only a child; consider, Monsieur, she is but a child."

I was about to protest, when she stopped me, saying: "Ah! no, Monsieur, don't deny it. Don't trouble. You hurt me. No! no! I like you. I respect you, but love and me are far, far asunder."

"Thank Heaven," I thought. "Here is one woman at last who does not love." Bluey was happy.

She stopped, sipped her tea, and then, extending her hand, placed it on mine. "I'll trust you, my friend," she said.

"Well," she began "I am the daughter of Madam Bossoni, the Russian Nihilist. You must have heard of her tragic death at the blowing skywards of the Emperor Alexander. My father was an Italian, a revolutionary Socialist. He was guillotined for his pains in trying to better the portion of mankind. I was then left an orphan. The Revolutionary Tribunal took me as a child and protected me, educated me, and finally made me swear to consecrate my life to the aims, the objects, and the end of a secret society. I swore fidelity, not knowing my mind or the true objects of the band of assassins that surrounded me. After many vicissitudes in France, Russia, and England, I was told off to my present position to guard, watch, and spy on Marjorie."

"Marjorie!" I exclaimed, half rising.

"Marjorie," she coolly replied. "Listen!" she continued. "Years and years ago Marjorie's father, being then a young man, fought the 'Black Hand' so successfully that some of the leaders were sent into penal servitude for long terms. The gang tried several times to do for him, but he was a smart, careful man, and they lost heavily. His very name became nauseating to the association. A grand council was held, and it was decided to kill his daughter, whom he loved beyond anything in this world or hoped for anything in the next. This plan was only abandoned by the death of Marjorie's father.

"The vendetta was then directed against the whole family. As the destruction of Marjorie would only make her brothers the richer, it was decided to keep watch and ward over her, and, by infinite scheming, to marry her, with the consent of her family, to one of the gang's choicest spirits. Funds were supplied for the purpose, and I am placed in

charge of Marjorie to further the scheme. Marjorie is to be involved in a matrimonial tangle to secure her fortune to swell the funds of the association.

"All the plans are well laid, but I would rather kill myself," said Jeanette, with animation, "than betray that sweet child into the hands of such ruffians. I confess I came to curse—but remain to bless. If Marjorie be warned and I am denounced, my doom is sealed. I have prayed—ah; Monsieur, none but my own heart knows how fervently—to the Blessed Trinity, the Virgin Mother, and the Saints—especially my patron Saint, St. Bartholomew—to remove this trial, this bitter cup from me.

"At last you came into our lives. You talked of the land of the free, the sunshine, the flowers, the birds, the national songs of a great, a free, and happy people. The thought assailed me. If I could only see dear Marjorie safe from the dangers of the invisible hand, and then fly to Australia—what joy would be mine! But, alas! my day dreams vanish as they come. Monsieur, why are the strata-gems of the wicked always played on the hearts of the young and the innocent? My position is intolerable. I am in that house acting a living lie.

"What, then, am I to do?" she asked, with tears in her eyes, and an appealing look at me. "What am I to do? Am I to wait until Marjorie is destroyed, and then calmly await my own destruction? I know the chief of the gang here. He is in love with me, and if I do my work well, if I further his plans for the sacrifice of my young mistress and the spoliation of her fortune, he will follow that up by making extra love to me—which I abhor. Whichever way I turn, shame and annihilation face me, unless you ——"

I could see a way out. "You know the chief of the cut-throats?" I asked.

"Oh, Monsieur," she replied, "he cuts no throats. He holds a good position in one of the foreign banks. He is an enthusiast, an anarchist, a dreamer. He talks always of bettering the lot of mankind. If needs be, he would sacrifice everything to what they call the 'Cause.'"

"Well, you know him?" I pressed.

"Yes, I know him well. He says he loves me, but his advances are abhorrent to me," she answered.

"Will you introduce me to him?"

"Most certainly, if you wish me to do so."

"That's settled. Now about Marjorie. She must be saved. Will you help me?"

"There's my hand on it. You want to marry her, you love her. You think that I, being a woman, would be jealous. No, I am not in love; I am in distress. All love in me is dead." After reflection she said: "You love Marjorie. I think she loves you. But she is young, with no set mind, greatly under the influence of her mother, and afraid of her brothers. So you must win her if you want her. You commence with the mother, for she likes you; but I warn you the fight for her will be long and heavy."

I assured her of my profound admiration for her—loved her for her confidence, and respected her as a sister. The latter word, I think, made her shudder.

"Here, Jeanette, take this 500-dollar bill," I said. "That, with the 500 dollars you have won to-day, will give you 1,000 dollars to put away, in case of emergency. Do not hesitate. It's yours, and if we are to be friends and mates, we must commence by seeing you secure for funds in case of emergency."

Take the money, my little sister." I kissed her hand.

She took the bill, and sipped her tea.

"Now you must help me to win Marjorie."

"You must win her yourself," she replied.

"How can I when I never see her alone?"

"I'll make the opportunity for you."

"When?"

"To-night."

"Say, at midnight, when all is hushed in sleep?"

She thought a moment.

"Yes, midnight, but remember you must, on your honour"—she stopped, eyed me closely, and then extended her delicate hand, saying, "I am sure I can trust you, Monsieur St. Clair, even with an innocent child like dear, dear Marjorie."

I was certainly getting on.

We rose to depart. I turned to pick up one of my gloves that had fallen on the ground. Jeanette was outside the tea room booth, opening her sunshade. I gave a casual glance to the inner compartment of the fashionable tea building, when I saw a waiter's white garb. Antonio, my spy! Had he seen us? I did not think so. He was engaged as a tea waiter, and was turning an honest penny, instead of turning the moths out of my clothes. All the same, I had an uneasy presentiment about this fellow. Fate seemed to have inspired me to engage him as a valet, expressly that he might dog my heels and annoy me.

As Jeanette and I approached the stand, I whispered to her: "The bargain is complete. You help me to Marjorie, and I will help you to Australia. Remember, you are my little sister. Until midnight we are strangers. May the gods protect you."

When we returned from the races with "money to burn," everybody was happy. Strange happiness that money begets! The Hampdens were rich—yet their success on the racecourse exhilarated them vastly. Ma was as frolicsome as a young girl. George was full of fun. He had won 3,000 dollars, and wanted to explain why he backed the winner. Marjorie was radiant. She had won a whole thousand dollars. The Chief of the Police had won 5,000 dollars, and was so delighted that he insisted on staying to dinner, and getting a soaking of good wine on the cheap.

Antonio was the wet blanket—so far as I was concerned. He was on my mind, and on my nerves, and might soon be on my chest! In my room he explained, with a grin, that the restaurant proprietor at the races was an Italian relation of his, on his grandfather's side, and as blood among the Italians is about as thick as yesterday's ice cream, he assisted his relative. No, he had not seen me in the tea house. I knew he lied.

Dinner was served, and the casual clatter of knives and forks and babel of tongue ensued. To my surprise I was seated, by direction, next to Jeanette. She seemed confused, spoke little, ate little, and was altogether too serious for my liking. Nearing the end of the meal, Jeanette placed a crumpled note in my hand under the table.

On reaching my room after dinner, I unfolded the missive. It read as follows: "All goes well. Manœuvre, in case of mishaps, to meet me on the angle of the balcony near the corner of your room to-night, as the clock strikes ten to the minute. Until ten o'clock, adieu! my friend, my brother."

The evening was spent as most evenings are spent

in the drawing-rooms of the moneybags of America—lots of silly talk-nothing real, little that was intellectual, nothing worth remembering. Ma was in good form, and gave us a dose of the virtues of her departed husband. I yawned, answered questions, and longed for the sluggish hands of the clock to move to the hour of ten. Making an excuse, I retired at 9.30, and potted about my room in the noiseless slippers which we use when on a "decent" job. I quickly divested myself of my collar and tie and frivolities, and placed a silk handkerchief around my neck. A lounge coat and soft slouch hat completed my outfit. At last the clock struck ten.

I switched off the light. Then I heard a light step. I sprang to the door. Jeanette was at her post. She whispered hurriedly, "It's arranged at 12 to-night. Marjorie and I will saunter forth. You meet us in the greenery. You know the shrubbery across the Eastern corner of the bowling green?"

"Will you be secreted there? Take a pillow and rug with you. Then if you are discovered, you will be merely enjoying the cool night."

"I will place Marjorie under your care, then I will retire and watch to give you the alarm if anyone approaches. Protect her honour. She is simple, and thinks it is love's duty to steal interviews at midnight. Beyond this, she knows nothing. Work out your own destiny."

I swore fidelity, kissed her hand in total submission to her correct wishes—and she was gone. As she descended the back stairs, I heard a rustle amongst the trees beyond. Was Antonio trapping me to destroy me with the Black Hand, or setting up a trap for blackmailing purposes? Was Jeanette

safe? I'll swear I heard a distinct rustle amongst the trees; yet I would take a risk, and go.

As a precautionary measure I pocketed a small revolver, fully loaded, threw the rug and cushion on the floor, filled my case with cigarettes, closed the doors, and rested on my bed until midnight approached. There, in that darkened room, with naught but my own dark thoughts as company, what a world of ideas came and went through my brain! We are all children of impulses.

At a quarter-to-twelve, by the aid of a flickering candle—the light of which I obscured from the window by shading it behind the water jug—I drank a small bottle of champagne, and placed another in my inside pocket for future use. Champagne is useful. It fires the blood, gladdens the heart, and helps us to take risks. Then I muffled myself up, secured the cushion and rug, and made my way by the back stair to the grounds.

Once in the garden, I glided from bush to bush, pausing to listen. I heard no sound. In this way I gained the shrubbery which Jeanette had indicated. There, again I listened with the ears of the stag and peered out into the night, with the strained eyes of the lynx. The rising moon daintily tipped with silver the tops of the fruit trees in the beautiful garden. At last I heard a sound, faint at first, then more pronounced. The light step of love, of hope—they came closer, closer. Yes, it was Jeanette and Marjorie.

They were walking along the shady side of the wall, and were imperceptible to any but the watcher. They came nearer, and did not pause. Then, a little run, one spring, and they were in the shrubbery. I threw off all restraint, caught Marjorie in my arms,

drew her to my heart, and kissed her, murmuring "My own! my own!" She struggled a little—only a little, for she was happy. I made a snug seat for her. Jeanette, after fresh injunctions on my part, left us, and I watched her depart through the bushes far beyond, like a spectre in the night—the fatal night of a fatal love.

CHAPTER XVI.—THE DRUG & THE DEVIL.

POOR little Marjorie ! Simple child. A pure dove, in an old hawk's nest ! She was frightened, and tremblingly protested against my boisterous love. But I know how women like to think they have sent you off your balance over their charms. I held her tightly in my iron grasp, and swore to her she was my only, my first love. The passion for woman had, until then, been unborn in me. She had kindled a fire that would burn on, and on, until it was satisfied with the object of its adoration, or consumed me in the fury of my frantic disappointment. I soothed, kissed, and petted her like a child. "All's fair in love and war." The stakes were high, the game was proportionately hazardous. So I continued my siege to Marjorie's heart. I told her of the joyous land that gave me birth, but I did not mention that the authorities in That dear land were at the moment anxious to award me free board and free lodgings, with healthy restrictions.

My blood and lineage I mapped out before her—the blood of the St. Clairs of County Wicklow, flowing in an uninterrupted line for nearly 800 years, in our veins. For nearly 200 years our name had been on the register. I coughed, and forgot to tell her where the register was kept.

She trembled when I suggested a runaway match, but raised no violent opposition. My fierce importunings were punctuated with hot embraces, and, of course, "burning kisses straight out of the oven."

After a full hour's hard work at high-grade love-making, I was just commencing to knock up—not knock off—when Marjorie admitted in soft, remonstrating murmurs that she loved me a little, just a little.

That encouraged me to enter upon the second line of my siege of silent love making—

Two souls with but a single thought—
Two hearts that beat as one.

Marjorie clung to me in a listless, dreamy fashion. Her face touched mine, her eyes remained closed. She was, I believe, in the seventh heaven of delight—with love's first blush over.

This long dream, the embrace of love's arms and hearts, continued. How long, who knows? I know I was nearly exhausted. The pace was strong. It was a sure go in the Love Stakes for three-quarters of a million. Yes; the pace was a cracker from the word, "Go." The wine had worked off me; my blood was rather cold in my veins. At last Marjorie raised her head, gently, and asked me in a soft murmur if I could get her a drink. Of course, I could. I produced the small bottle of wine.

She did not like to take it. Wine always gave her a headache, and put her to sleep, and she did not want to go to sleep there, at that moment—she was so happy. She smiled, drank the wine—half the bottle—with a big gulp. Then she handed me the silver mug and I drank what was left, with the new print of her sweet lips on the mug.

The third act in the race for a million now commenced. Marjorie lay in my arms, her head on my breast, and whilst I planted kisses upon her upturned dreamy face, I whispered tales of love

into her willing ears. She smiled from her baby dreamland as though she were talking to the good fairies who were promising her a happy marriage, a beautiful home, and a loving, kind, and considerate husband, whose love would sustain her through a long and joyous life. Poor child! Poor, innocent youngster! She was a baby in love.

She smiled and murmured, "Dearest Duncan! Do you really love me so much? Will you *always* be mine?" The wine was working in her brain.

The excitement of this midnight meeting was evidently too much for this child. She went into a gentle, happy slumber, and smiled, poor child, in her happiness. I extricated myself from her close embrace, rested her head on the cushion, and raised her on to the long seat, throwing the rug over her. I watched her in the moonlight. She was in a semi-stupor.

The clock struck three!

I sat by her side on a stool, kissed her, and embraced her fervently. What was I to do? There she reclined in perfect peace, and—to her pure mind—in perfect security. To *my* mind, she was a helpless little child, whom high fortune placed in my power. One move on my part—and Marjorie was mine for ever. Could heart of man consider anything more cowardly than the fulfilment of my dark thoughts—that youngster's ruin!

Still, the devil was by my side, and ever and anon whispered into my ready ear, "Fool! Fool! A fortune is in your grasp. Play your best card for a woman's soul and fortune. Why parley? On! On!! Hesitate not!!! In a whisper he hissed, "Does 'Society consider you? Why, then, do you hesitate to claim one of Society's children? Society

destroyed your little sister Daisy. Society profligates, uses, and destroys the daughters of the poor, as playthings, and sends innocent children like poor Daisy, your sister, into dishonourable graves. Why, then, hesitate? You have been at war with Society all your life. Society is ready with a hempen rope to do you to death, as your father died. Why, then, do you refuse to claim one of its children, one of its pets? If you hesitate longer, you will be false to your past life, and bring a plague on your future."

My blood was on fire. Marjorie had clasped her hands around my neck, and held me vice-like, and, in her love, she was kissing me. Our feverish lips met in long ecstasies. Our hearts answered each other with wild beatings. Marjorie was in love—pure love. I was in a fume, with treacherous thoughts and designs. Fire seemed in my veins.

Yet, at times her good angel would say, in unmistakable tones, "For shame! For very shame, protect the girl, the baby-girl you hope to make your lawful wife. Protect her, pure and undefiled. Renounce the promptings of the devil, remember that sin covers heaven with mourning, hell with flames, and the earth with weeds. It brings sickness and pestilence, famine and death into the world. It dug the graves of the most famous and populace cities. It presided at the destruction of Babylon, of Nineveh, of Memphis, of Jerusalem, of Rome, and other dead and buried cities. Therefore, renounce it! Free that child, and be happy."

When I was on the point of relaxing my cruel designs, the devil would tap me on the shoulder, and say, "Does the true hawk refuse to devour the pigeon, because it is hardly feathered? If you allow your prey to go unscathed, you are damned

for all time. You'll lose your money. Old age will creep upon you, and you'll be an outcast, ending your days in misery, dreaming of what might have happened had you claimed Marjorie Hampden on this fatal night."

"Three quarters of a million," the devil whispered insinuatingly, "depends on the fastening up of that woman in love's books of steel. The first love of a woman lasts longest. The first love of a girl lasts for ever, if it is not crushed by brutality. Why stop on the brink of success? If she were a poor man's daughter you, Bluey Grey, would have destroyed her long ago, and have her cast out ere now. After all," his Satanic Majesty urged, "you are only emulating the conduct of the greatest cut-throat that ever cursed mankind—Napoleon, when he anticipated the royal nuptials with Marie Louise."

Thus the devil kept whispering, and prompting, and was winning, hard held, in that fearful midnight race between virtue and vice when——

A cry from without startled me. It was the cry of a woman—Jeanette. I listened. It came again, with force. "Save me, Monsieur! Oh, save me!" pierced through the dampness of the breaking summer morning. "Save me," she screamed again.

Hurriedly throwing my rug over Marjorie, I hastened to the spot whence the cry came. My heart nearly stood still. Jeanette lay prostrate, and Antonio stood over her in a threatening attitude.

"Now by all the furies in hell what does this mean, you devil incarnate?" I exclaimed.

"Traitor! " he hissed, through his black teeth and white trembling lips, "Traitor! "

I picked Jeanette up. She had fainted. "Go! " I said, in a frenzy of anger. "Go! Quit this spot

and this place for ever, you devil's imp, or I'll shoot you like a dog! "

He merely grinned, and pointed to the shrubbery house where Marjorie lay on the bench, half stupid. Jeanette recovered her senses, and I assisted her to the shrubbery. She and Marjorie were soon in each other's arms. Antonio stood near a peach tree in full bloom, grinning and smacking his lips with blood-thirsty delight. Morning was now breaking forth in all its summer grandeur.

The women made their escape. George was an early riser. What was I to do. A bold act was necessary. I acted. Going up to Antonio I pointed my revolver at his head, and said, with undisguised passion, "You dog! I have stood you long enough. Get out of this ground and out of this house; otherwise, I will shoot, and my aim won't miss. Go! "

He retreated. I followed, at a good pace. He knew I meant business. I did mean it. In fact, had he appeared before me alone in the darkness of the night just past, I would have put his light out, and have sworn next morning that he had attempted to burgle the house and that I had shot him.

Marjorie reached her room in safety. Poor child! She was broken up. I made for my room, and only just missed meeting George—who was coming down the garden, whistling—by dodging behind a thick hedge. He was on his way to the pond below, to feed his pet fish. I escaped him, and reached my room in a disordered state of body and mind. I steadied my nerves with a bottle of wine, washed and dressed, and was ready for any events the day might bring forth. Exposure, scandal, perhaps death—all seemed to hover around me. I involuntary

trembled when the thought pressed on my mind, how the devil was winning by a short head, in that fearful midnight race in the shrubbery.

George and I breakfasted alone. It was an ominous meal. George ate in silence. I was uneasy, and had dark forebodings. As George was rising from the table he said, "You will excuse my mother not appearing at table, St. Clair. My sister is ill."

"Ill!" I ejaculated. "Not seriously, I trust."

"No," he replied, "I think not. But she is delirious. Mother and Jeanette are with her."

I had no mind for eating, and soon left the table. Passing through the hall, I noticed the morning's postbag. I picked up the bundle, and carefully went through the letters.

Two were addressed in Antonio's handwriting—one to George, the other to Marjorie's mother. I had only just time to pocket them when George came into the hall.

I sauntered forth into the open, in the hope of meeting Jeanette. I had not long to wait. George, seated comfortably in his motor, had hardly left the establishment when Jeanette appeared. She was voluble. "Oh, Monseieur! It's dreadful! It's very dreadful! It's very dreadful, my dear Monsieur! Marjorie is delirious. I am afraid her mother has caught odds and ends of the cause of her distraction. She talks of St. Clair—of the shrubbery—of the wine you gave her—and a thousand dreadful things. Poor child! I hope her brain is not injured. She is now asleep, and her mother is resting.

I told her of Antonio's perfidy in sending letters.

Shuddering, she said, "Ah! Monsieur, that man will end us both. He is a villain, but I doubt if he

belongs to the Black Hand. I am sure the chief would have told me if he was a member. I fear him. If I can get away I'll meet you opposite the European Bank at 4 p.m. to-day, introduce you to the chief, and you must do the rest. If I am suspected of treachery to 'the Cause,' my death will pay the penalty."

At this point, a servant handed Jeanette her letters. She opened one, and then gave a sharp, half-suppressed screech. "Oh! Monsieur. We are lost. Read! Read!"

It was a letter from Antonio with the Black Hand staring at her from the envelope. The letter ran:—

Traitress to the Cause that has for its ends the downfall of the rich and the elevation of the poor, your condemnation and death is only a matter of hours.

ANTONIO.

"Oh! Monsieur," she wailed. "We are lost, irrevocably lost! What are we to do?"

I did not like the turn of events. So, in front of Jeanette, I opened the letter that Antonio had addressed to George, and read:—

Master George,—Beware! You have in the bosom of your family a black reptile under the name of St. Clair. His real name is Bluey Grey, an Australian thief. He is in your house to seduce your sister and rob her of her money. He held her prisoner in the shrubbery last night for four hours in the dark. They were alone. The shrubbery was watched by that double traitress, Jeanette. If you believe me not, look on the top shelf in the shrubbery. Behind some stray flower-pots you will find the empty champagne bottle, with which liquor Grey, the thief, dosed your sister. His gold cigarette-case is there also. A broken necklace and a hair ribbon of your sister's are also amongst the articles I found on the floor of the shrubbery.

Question your sister alone. She will confess that thief's culpability. If further proof is needed, search Bluey Grey's No. portmanteau. It rests near the left side of the head of the bed

in his room. It is full of loaded dice, edged cards, and other articles of the trade of a cheat. If you want him denounced I will denounce him before all the world to his face. If you want me put the following advertisement in to-night's evening paper, viz. :—

Yes. Come to my house at seven o'clock.

If no such advertisement appears I'll conclude you disregard my advice, and that you are prepared to continue housing a common thief and seducer.

ANTONIO.

I folded the letter up without giving Jeanette the full text of it. I then opened the missive with which I had been personally honoured by my quondam valet. It ran :—

You called me dog. Beware my bite! Within three days you'll be no more. Your sentence will be pronounced to-morrow night at our meeting. Say your prayers—if you can.

ANTONIO.

I showed this to Jeanette. She trembled like an aspen leaf. I laughed and said, "Cheer up! my pretty Jeanette. Don't you see the devil sticks to his own. If our luck were out, and the old boy had deserted us, would these letters have fallen into our hands, and spoilt the wretch's game. George is ignorant of the business. Antonio thinks he knows all. So the plot thickens, and by this time to-morrow Antonio may be no more. First, to the shrubbery, to secure those tell-tale articles."

Sure enough they were all there.

After some thought, I evolved a plan which promised to serve our turn.

Addressing Jeanette, I said: "You must send a telephone message to your Bank Clerk of Cut-throats, and say you must see him at four o'clock. I will then take the matter in hand. Antonio's destruction will be my business. I am off to town to see the Chief of Police. Watch Marjorie! Assure her

of my love. Give her this diamond and emerald ring to play with. Meet me at the appointed hour in town. Watch every letter that comes by this afternoon's mail, and keep all suspicious-looking letters for me."

I next went through my portmanteaux, and destroyed all such trifles as loaded dice and edged cards, and burnt all letters, old or new. That department was cleansed.

CHAPTER XVII.—THE CHIEF OF THE BLACK HAND.

AT the appointed hour, in one of Chicago's fashionable coffee-houses, Jeanette arrived with her companion, to whom she introduced me. The Chief of the Black Hand was a fair man, spare of frame, with pointed features and light-coloured and very thin hair. His sallow complexion and high cheek bones made the hollows in his jaw more conspicuous, and his intelligent eyes, of perfect blue, danced with the quickness and alertness of the eagle. He wore a well-fitting grey suit, black necktie, and a soft felt hat. Nothing whatever denoted him to be the head of the most terrible organisation of blackmail the world had ever seen. Commonplace talk filled in a full 20 minutes of suspense. At last, Jeanette said, "I have told Monsieur Piron all. It was best. I told him all that took place since the scoundrel left," she said, shyly smiling.

"I don't know the fellow at all," Piron said slowly. "I don't think he belongs to our organisation. If he does, he has no power to interfere with Jeanette or her charge."

Jeanette smiled in triumph, and looked at me in a sort of I-told-you-so fashion. Poor Jeanette! She was happy. "I'll see to him," the Chief further ventured, sipping the last of his coffee. He still eyed me, as though he was trying to size me up.

Jeanette then departed to watch over Marjorie, and, incidentally, to hold the citadel for me.

"If you are in trouble, Mr. St. Clair, and want my assistance, please be plain," said Piron. "Be assured that our band of patriots deals swiftly with men and things. Procrastination is not one of

our planks. If we decide to-night that a certain individual is to lose his or her life, in the interest of common humanity, that life is taken without delay. We act only in the interest of mankind and the happiness of the human family."

I thanked him for his kindness, and eagerly shook him by the hand. It had a cold, jellyfish-like touch.

Without beating about the bush, I told him, plainly and plumply, that I wanted him to stop Antonio's inroads in my affairs. He eyed me, long and closely; then leaned on the table, like a yellow jungle tiger about to spring on its prey.

"What reward do you pay—to the poor, to the helpless, to those who are without any of the good things of this earth, if we help you?"

"Two thousand dollars," I replied.

"Not money enough," he responded, recoiling into his former position. "You are rich, and will not give one dollar to the poor unless our unwritten law compels you to do so."

"I'll make it five thousand," I said.

He still eyed me. I could see 10,000 dollars plainly imprinted upon his brain, and it photographed its reflection on my disturbed mind. I was right. Slowly, but surely and firmly, he said, "I would not take a cent. for myself. I hate money; it's the curse of the world. Give my association 10,000 dollars, and we will try to help you."

"Done!" I exclaimed, extending my hand.

Again in slow, measured tones, he said: "I'll have to make inquiries, and be assured of my ground and that your case against the man is good. Also, I must consult our brethren. Will you attend our meeting to-night and explain to the brethren in your own way?"

I shook my head murmuring "Not much!" His suggestion caused the cold drops of perspiration to busily chase each other down my spine. Attend his meeting—a fairly sultry request!

Seeing my objection, he said, with emphasis, "I give you my personal word of honour you will be safe with us, no matter how your application goes. You'll be as safe as in your own home. My honour is staked on it. Accept my word of honour, or break off our interview at once." His eyes sparkled. He spoke with much animation.

At last I agreed to attend, whereupon he said, "Be at the left-hand lamp post near the Town Hall to-night at 8.30. Your guide will have a dark green band on his right arm. Follow him with confidence." With that he rose, and left.

To make assurance doubly sure as regards my personal safety, I saw the Chief of Police. I explained to him that I was about to pay a private visit to the headquarters of the Black Hand. He knew all about them. They had their uses, solid uses. He winked. He thought I would be safe. Still, he would place an officer in the pathway of myself and the jugular-vein cutter, whom I was to meet at 8.30; and the officer would caution the gentleman with the carving knife up his sleeve, and hold him responsible for my safe return.

As the clock chimed 8.30 the chirrup of a squeaky voice accosted me by asking if I was Mr. St. Clair. I nodded, looked at the green band on his skinny arm, and said, "Yes, I am he."

"Then, follow me," he said. I followed, until the officer of the law and jaw-juggler stopped us, with: "Where are you taking this gentleman to?"

"To our headquarters," answered Green-band.

"Then," said the officer, "I hold you and all your band responsible for his safe return."

Thus assured, I walked after my guide, with elastic step. I felt like going to Antonio's funeral. I could hear the toll of his death-knell.

On! On! Up one street, down another, I followed as though I was in a walking stakes handicap competition, and had only one to beat to win, and that one was the chap in front. At last he stopped. We entered a Dago fruit shop. Some lingo passed between the man behind the counter and the gentleman with the green band.

Then we made our way to an inner room. The door was locked behind us. We went through into another room, the door of which also was locked. There we rested for some 15 minutes. Neither spoke. At last, a sound was heard, and the wall or door swung over on a pivot in the centre.

"Enter, please!" exclaimed my guide.

I did not like the job.

"Here goes!" I thought, wondering whether they would saw me up, or simply cut my throat in a gentlemanly way.

When I had passed through the yawning gap that had widened as if by magic, the wall fell back into its former position. My guide next led me to the centre of the dark room. "Please stand perfectly still," he said. "I must bind your eyes. Don't touch the bandages."

In rather a quick voice, I said: "Hurry up! I have to meet the Chief of the Police at 10 o'clock. He is a great friend of mine." I thought I would work the police for all they were worth. It was my last straw before going to see St. Peter.

My eyes being bandaged, my guide held me by

the coat-cuff The floor began to move. We were descending in a slow, jerky fashion. I said, "Where are we labelled for? Did you take return tickets, eh?" No answer. We stopped.

"This way, please," said my guide.

The damp smell and odour of a close cellar nearly stifled me. After a dozen paces, the guide touched an electric bell. A door seemed to glide back on rollers within the walls. We entered another compartment, where my bandages were removed. There we waited. I could hear loud voices, but could see no one, excepting my guide, who was dumb. Presently, two high doors swung open and a ray of light fell on us. The babel of tongues in the lighted room foretold the presence of, perhaps, a hundred men. The fumes of tobacco smoke came out of the chamber in poisonous gusts. A gong sounded, and then there was silence.

"Enter!" commanded a voice of thunder. It was from the full range of the band.

We lost no time in obeying.

The council room or cellar—for such it was—was fully 50 feet wide and about 100 feet in length. It was lighted brilliantly, the floors were thickly carpeted, and the walls were painted a flaring red and adorned with strange devices concerning the right and liberty of man, such as:—

THE POOR SHALL BE FED.

THE INDOLENT AND RICH SHALL DIE.

HE WHO FIGHTS AND DIES FOR LIBERTY IS BLESSED.

COWARDS DIE A THOUSAND DEATHS; A BRAVE MAN ONLY ONE.

THERE IS NO GOD BUT MIGHT.

SOME MEN ARE GREAT BECAUSE THE PEOPLE ARE ON THEIR KNEES.

STAND ERECT.

Large black hands were painted on each wall. Some of the members of the Black Hand wore masks.



*Bluy at the
Black Hand
meeting*

They *were* a motley crew—a mixture of the young and the old, the fat and the lean, the sallow-cheeked dreamer and the big-chopped old warrior who lived on the game. Tables for cards and for drinks and for writing and reading were scattered all over the place. At the end of the chamber a rude platform was erected, some 3ft. from the ground. Tables, chairs, water carafes and glasses were at hand.

I was motioned to ascend the platform, and I obeyed. I did not at all like the place, and wished myself well out of it, especially as I could see nothing of my friend, the President. Some minutes transpired before Piron entered, apparently through a solid wall at the end of the room. He moved slowly towards the raised platform, his movement being a direct imitation of the strut of His Holiness the Pope when he enters the Sistine Chapel at Rome to pronounce the excommunication of a remiss member of his church.

Piron was dressed in a long scarlet robe, with silken black patches sewn thereon, representing the Black Hand. His mighty head and thin flaxen hair was covered with a red cap, the front of which was emblazoned in gold with a representation of the emblems of death—the skull and cross bones.

He was accompanied by three or four "Deacons," who carried the "Book of Fate" with fastidious care. The members of the gang stood erect, in solemn silence, as he approached, and the strange procession marched to the platform, which the Chief and his deacons ascended. The Chief scanned the "Book of Fate," and rapped the table with a wooden hammer, to enjoin silence.

The President then informed his dearly-beloved brethren that before the general business commenced

he would like to place before them a proposition of Monsieur St. Clair's, which would, he understood, help the cause of humanity and substantially add to the brethren's funds. He could, and would, vouch for the integrity and the honesty of purpose of Monsieur St. Clair. It was a matter of business. It meant 10,000 dollars. (At the mention of the figures there was much applause.) With such an amount many of the poor could be sustained. The *quid pro quo* Mr. St. Clair required was the silencing of a worthless reprobate. Murmurs of approval ran through the room. The money, their faces indicated, was big; the job, small.

The President having asked me to say a few words, I explained that I was unaccustomed to public speaking, and he did the talking for me.

"Name, Monsieur le President, Name?" was the answer of the gang.

The President leaned sideways to me, and asked the name of the man I was anxious the devil should have before his allotted time.

I replied, "Antonio Costello, a native of Turin."

The President slowly repeated the name to the mob. A deadly silence ensued. The men looked at each other. A murmur rose, and grew louder and louder, until it reached a deadly screech, which broke forth into yells of "Treachery! Treachery! Treachery! Lock the doors!"

In vain the President rapped with the wooden hammer. At last, a bustle and noise, with some applause, was heard at the further end of the room. I was not long left in doubt as to the identity of the hero. My heart went into my boots. Up went a tremendous cry of "Vive! Vive Antonio."

An instant later, Antonio stood before the judg-

ment seat. His face was pallid as death, his eyes bloodshot, his lips white and quivering. He grinned sarcastically—such a grin! It makes me shudder to think of it even now. I saw I was trapped and beaten—about to be done to death in that stuffy cellar. But I resolved to die hard. Was the President in the joke? I thought not. His face was grave, his voice husky.

Antonio's first words were: "Monsieur le President, that man, Bluey Grey, is a murderer."

Murmurs of suppressed excitement rang through the gang, who appeared indignant that anyone should dare to do a little murdering on his own account, without joining *their* union!

I was a "blackleg" in the business—that was certain.

"Yes," Antonio repeated, "a murderer and a thief."

"Oh, oh!" were cries from all parts of the room.

"Moreover, he is a dice-loader, a card-sharper, and a ravisher," Antonio added, and then paused for a further supply of breath.

I felt like sliding off this planet.

But Antonio's crowning charge was reserved for his peroration. "This murderer, Bluey Grey, alias St. Clair, alias God-knows-what, has basely betrayed a ward of this our brotherly association—its chief ward, its richest heiress, Marjorie Hampden, a child mortgaged to this society through the ill-deeds of her father. Therefore, I charge you to pronounce sentence on this Bluey Grey.

"Death!" was the laconic verdict of the assemblage.

A shiver ran down my back; my knees began to knock each other. The President's face was serious.

He seemed dumbfounded. The infuriated "Black Handers" made a move, as if to rush the platform, for the amiable purpose of pulling me to pieces limb by limb. It was lovely! Simply lovely!

"He wished to compass the death of one of our comrades, our noble Antonio," yelled a ferocious Italian. "Why should we hesitate?"

The President's hammer had no effect to stop the tumult.

At last, I rose to my feet to have a word—whilst my head was on. "Remember!" I bawled, "I came here on the word of honour of your President, and with an assurance of safety from the Chief of Police. I knew I was to meet this unmitigated scoundrel, Antonio, here—(that was a corker)—I knew the lies he would hiss forth at me, but I decline recrimination. I wish to depart from here, and demand free liberty to do so, on your President's word of honour."

My very audacity carried them off their legs. They murmured and muttered; but my death was, I felt, at least postponed.

The President rose, and said that his word of honour was pledged and, if they were going to run a stiletto into St. Clair's heart, they had better run one into his heart first. He courted death before dishonour. (Some cheers.) Good old gag!

The President moved towards the door, and I followed. We had got half-way across the spacious room when Antonio screeched, "Don't allow him to go! You'll never see him again. He belongs to a smart set. Stop him, or we are lost! He'll have us all murdered in our beds! Stop him!"

The mob made a movement to surround us. We

were within ten paces of the door—a football scrimmage was not in it!

"Make for the door!" whispered the President. "Castino," he added, addressing one of his deacons, "you know the spring. Touch it. See that the door opens quickly. Show the gentleman into the street by the back entrance. I charge you, on your honour, to protect him until the street lamps are visible. Then he will have to take his chance."

All this was said in a few seconds. The mob came on like released furies. "Death to the traitor! Death to the traitor!" they yelled. When within two paces of the door an attempt was made to seize me. The President faced his unruly following, and, holding his cap of authority in one hand, cried: "Back! Back all of you! Back!"

As if in mocking answer, the voice of Antonio rang out, "Kill him, or we all are lost. Kill him!"

In the meantime the President's deacon touched the spring, the door opened, and I gave one bound after him into the darkened chamber. The door closed with a bang, and a loud thundering noise came through the strong doors, as though they were being charged by a mob of infuriated bulls. The terrible din and the dying silence of the fierce imprecations of this murderous mob caught our ears as we hurriedly entered the lift that carried us to the next floor. Here my eyes were bandaged, and I walked about 60 paces to the easterly end of the chamber, where there was another lift. We entered and descended some 30 feet. Here an iron door appeared to creak on its hinges and open, and a gust of foul air blew in, nearly stifling us. We traversed what I considered to be a long stone-floor passage. The roof was so low that our heads struck it now and

again. The air was damp and muggy—nearly putrid, and startled rats now and again scuttled across our pathway. My companion was silent. At last a fresh atmosphere was perceptible. We next passed through a small man-hole to the right, ascended a dozen steps, crossed a heavy concrete floor, ascended about 20 feet in another lift, then passed into a carpeted room, and then into another room, whence came sounds of men and women's voices.

It was a hotel reading room; the next room was the saloon bar; and further on was the public bar, facing the street. The sight of life, liberty, safety, and general animation in the broad, lighted street was a joy to my mind and a tonic to my nerves. My visit to the lower regions wherein the Black Hand held sway seemed like a dream. I indulged in a small bottle of wine and a cigarette, and made for my home. My thoughts were centred on Marjorie. I would turn over a new leaf, or rather open a new book, and live respectably with Marjorie—and, of course, her ample funds. It is easy to be good on the interest and compound interest of £600,000!

The clock struck 11, as I entered the lodge gate of Marjorie's home. All was darkness, except a flickering, dim light in the hall. The place was as hushed as death. Even Marjorie's little dog was not on its accustomed mat on the verandah. I entered, rapped, and knocked. The light was out in the drawing-room and also in the dining-room. The star-light was also gone to sleep. What was the matter? A cold chill came over me. Was everyone murdered? Was I decoyed away to give the Black Hand a

chance to do murder on a wholesale line? I rapped again. No reply.

I cried out, "Anybody at home?"

In response to my cry a door opened on the upper stairway, and a woman appeared in a wrapper. It was Jeanette. She was wearing a dressing-gown, and her feet were slippered. Our faces met in the light. She had been crying.

"What's the matter, Jeanette?" I asked.

She sobbed and replied, "Ah, Monsieur. Such trouble! Such trouble. They are all gone; yes, all gone!"

"Gone? Gone! where?" I asked. "And who has gone? For pity's sake, be plain."

"Well," she began, "when you left to-day Marjorie grew worse. She talked incessantly of you, of champagne, and of love. Then she cried, screamed, and became unmanageable. A doctor was sent for, and he ordered her off to New York, on the instant. She was, he said, suffering from a bad form of hysteria. Her mother went with her."

"And George," I inquired, "has he gone too?"

"Yes," Jeanette answered.

"Gone, too. Then we are alone?" I said, as I scanned her tear-scalded face. "Do you think you will be lonesome?"

She shook her head.

"Then for goodness sake give me a bottle of wine and a biscuit," I said, "for I am famished."

After I had refreshed myself I proposed that we should adjourn to the balcony, where listeners could not hear us, and talk over the fearful happenings, adding that I would tell her everything about the interview I had had with the "Black Hand."

She hesitated. I boldly drew her towards me, and comforted and petted her.

Poor Jeanette! She seemed quite broken up. I assured her of my ability to help her, and proposed that she should get ready to fly to Australia with me. Then I gave her a good glass of champagne, which, she protested, always made her ill. Still, she drank it. Next I made a comfortable nest for the forlorn child of the Revolution, gave her another glass of wine, and then poured my tales of adventurous plans for her future welfare and happiness into her willing ear. Oh, how she fell to my talk.

Marjorie, I persisted, was but a child, and not a fit companion for a wanderer like me. . . . Still, I liked her, respected her; but loved her not.

Poor Jeanette gave a slight start, drew nearer to me, and whispered, "You are such deceivers. One's brain is puzzled to understand you. Yet, I believe you; I think you are honest—yes, fair-minded. Ah! Monsieur, if you could only help me to get away from this accursed ground of murder and death, I would be your sister, your little sister."

"Not sister, Jeanette," I replied, as I kissed her, "but my love, my own dear girl."

Poor Jeanette! Fortune's plaything! Lovely girl. If I ever did love anybody, it was poor Jeanette. At least, I think so.

CHAPTER XVIII.—JEANETTE IN A TRAP.

HAVING helped Jeanette to a seat on a lounge-couch, I playfully stole my arm around her waist.

She remonstrated with "No! No! Monsieur. You are a flirt. We must have no love-making. I believe I hate what they call love."

"Then you deny your looks and sex, my beautiful Jeanette," I remarked. "My own Jeanette, I love you." And drawing close to her, I whispered, "I love Marjorie's money, only her money."

"Oh, I am shocked," Jeanette protested. But this was not true, for in reality she was delighted.

"Listen to me, Jeanette," I said, seriously. "Marjorie's money is as necessary to us as the air we breathe is to keep life's blood circulating. Without it we are lost. We cannot go abroad—without money we cannot move, but must remain to be murdered in the end. Marjorie's money will remove us far, far from this murderous place—and from the Black Hand."

I drew her to me, poor trembling little girl, and explained, in my own way, and to suit my own purpose, the happenings of the night, with a lengthy account of much that did *not* happen.

"Now, you see the necessity of acting in unison and at once," I urged. "With Marjorie's money, we could leave this country and nestle ourselves in a nook where detection could be defied. If you help me, as you can, I'll make a settlement on you of 50,000 dollars, and take you with us, unobserved, to the land under the Southern Cross."

She smiled, and said, "Then you would love Marjorie, after all. What should I love? Shall I not be in your road."

"Here's a go," I thought, "My Italian beauty is already jealous."

"You would love me, and I would requite your love," I said.

"Ah! Monsieur; you would be Marjorie's. I could not love you."

"Yes, you could," I replied, "love me, platonically." (What a hottie!)

Jeanette smiled again, and whispered, "That's a dangerous brand of love, eh! Monsieur?"

The drugged champagne was at its deadly work.

I drew her to me, and, without resistance, kissed her a thousand times. Poor Jeanette! Poor Jeanette! She was mine! Yes, mine—to keep!

Three days of uninterrupted bliss followed the banquet of love on the verandah. Jeanette was happy. I was content, and felt at rest. My day dreams were delightful.

Marjorie, we learned, was getting better. Her mother wrote that she would return. Both Jeanette and I telegraphed and begged her to do nothing so foolish. The heat and the uncertain state of the weather might cause a relapse. Thereupon, the old dame decided to take another week's sea air, and George went to England to conclude a contract for pickled pork and pork sausages made out of the beef scrapings. So, all was joy. I drank daily at the fountain of love, and at night kissed the moonbeams of Heaven's light.

On the fourth day I carelessly chaffed Jeanette as to what jewels the family possessed. I was afraid of running short of cash; always looked ahead.

"Oh, there is ever such a lot," she replied.

"Where are they?" I asked.

"Principally in the safe deposit," she answered.

"No good to me," I mused. "What do they consist of, eh? No paste, I hope, eh?"

"Oh!" said Jeanette, thinking hard, "A fine string of pearls, a necklace worth 50,000 dollars, pearl bracelets with emerald clasps, emerald and diamond brooches, a richly-jewelled head band to imitate a British coronet, worth a fabulous sum." (Marjorie's father had it off a countess who lost her fortune, then her honour, and finally her life in the Russian struggle for liberty). Jeanette added that there were "ear-rings and diamond studs and goodness only knows what else"—the whole worth about £50,000 of English money.

I was contented. If all else failed, I might pinch the jewels. Mindful of the injunction of the sage, "Never begin a contest without providing a way out, in case of failure," I told Jeanette, with a yawn, I should like to have one look at those fine jewels.

"Nothing easier!" she replied. "I often take an order down for the lot, and bring them to Marjorie to play with."

"By Jove!" I thought, and my heart leaped within me. "Those jewels, or Marjorie, or both, shall be mine."

It occurred to me that it would be easy to substitute imitation jewels for the genuine ones. In a big job of this kind I should, of course, have to obtain assistance. I felt I could rely on Jeanette if I pledged myself to marry her.

She was already half pleading for me to marry her, and was often in tears. I hate the tyranny of tears. Days had now passed into weeks. Three

weeks had Jeanette and I kept house and home for the Hampdens. For three full weeks we were scarcely an hour out of each other's sight. Where would the end be—and when would it come? I was getting impatient. The next week I pretended to cool off a bit. I went to town in the morning, and stayed away until dinner hour in the evening. Jeanette saw my changed attitude. She cried, more and more, and became more my helpless prey every day. Poor child, she was mine, now, for nothing! Yes, nothing.

When the eighth week was entered upon Jeanette's high rosy colour commenced to fade from her beautiful face. Her eyes became languid and weary, she seemed tired and sick of life. At last I put the "acid" on her, in her helpless condition, about the jewels. I told her that with the jewels I could marry her, make her my honourable wife, and take her away, where we could live contentedly together.

She seemed dazed at my first mention of the jewels, became confused, and then, in half-broken English, with two large tears chasing each other down the now furrowed cheek, said, "Duncan, you do not mean I should steal them, do you?"

"Of course, I do," I growled.

She recoiled from me, and screamed, "No! Not that! I will die first. Oh! May the All-High have pity upon me in my helplessness!"

She would have fallen, only my strong arms were soon encircling her waist. I drew her to me, and kissed her. I had overshot the mark—"Shot the arrow o'er the house, and hurt my brother."

Poor Jeanette sobbed on my shoulder. She was stricken to the very heart. I explained that it was my love for her and her utter helpless state that

had prompted the rash suggestion, and I begged her to dismiss the matter.

"Forget it," I said, playing with her glossy hair, which grew in profusion on her small child-like head. "Anyhow, it would be no sin. Marjorie does not want them. She has no mind or care for them, and we want them to save our lives. If they were all to disappear to-morrow, Marjorie would forget them in two days. Why should the rich have everything, and we nothing? Be reasonable, my own, my darling." I drew her close, then closer to me, kissed her again and again, said many a "Good-night!" and went to my room, fully confident that Jeanette would fall to my proposition, if fate and the devil kept George, his angelic old mother, and my prospective wife, Marjorie, away for three days.

Next day I took Jeanette for a motor drive. She was happy, but feared for the future. I lavished kindness and money upon her. Her slightest wish was fulfilled before it was expressed. Still, I did not allow her to forget that we were living in a fool's paradise. A seven-pound brick from the Black Hand into our glass-house, or the turning of the tide of Marjorie against us—and we should become outcasts and penniless, and perhaps fugitives. And I gingerly mentioned the jewels to her to keep her mind active on that most important point.

Ten weeks had now gone since Jeanette and I were cast in this house alone. I decided to put her and her passion into the crucible of love. That night we were in our usual snug corner on the verandah near my room. All the servants had long since retired to their own quarters. The night was dark and threatening, a storm seemed to be in the air, and vivid lightning shot its flashes across the

drooping foliage in the garden and, for a brief space, lightened up the trees and avenues. Jeanette clung to me as to a rock of safety. She was dreadfully nervous. Her girlish vivacity had fled. She seemed now a thoughtful matron. All was hushed as death, not a sound beyond the beatings of two hearts, when she whispered, "Will you marry me, Duncan? I am afraid of ——"

I held her in my grasp, and replied, "My own darling. I love you beyond all the wide world, but you must trust me. Be mine, indeed. Commence your trust in me by giving me possession of the jewels in Marjorie's safe box." She gave a start, and buried her head deeper into my bosom. "Jeanette, be brave!" I went on. "You can get the box containing the jewels. Give me the contents, and place the empty box back. The loss—if such it can be called—will not be noticed, perhaps, for months, and then we shall be in the backwoods of Australia. Come, speak!"

Her sobs were her only reply.

"Jeanette," I said, "I am losing patience with you. You are selfish, and will consider your own ease before your own and my safety."

I released her; she was helpless. After a pause, I grew harsh. "Jeanette," I said severely, "I'll leave this place to-morrow, for London. Then you can blame yourself for our misery and our separation, and for being cast into the hands of those Black Handers."

She shuddered.

I strolled up to my room, and threw my "ports" about as though I were packing up. The noise of my packing up was not congenial music in her ears.

"Duncan! Duncan!" she called.

I went back to her. She placed her hand upon my shoulder, looked me fair in the face, and said, "Duncan, is it the jewels alone that are between us and marriage?"

"Of course, you foolish child. It is nothing else," I replied.

She was falling to it. "It's the money we require for our own safety," she said, and queried, "You'll marry me the day I hand you the jewels?"

This was a bit warm—quite sultry.

"I'll marry you, say within a week," I answered.

"On your honour?" she chirruped.

"On my honour, and on my soul," I replied.

"Then," she said, extricating herself, "I'll commit the sin—for sin it is. My life shall be spent in penance, asking for forgiveness. To lose you would kill me. You are all the world to me. My world, my heaven, my earth. I am yours. My love, body, and soul are yours, yours only."

She clung to me in a mad passion of frenzied love, and we sealed the bargain. The jewels were to be mine. I was winning easily—nothing else in the race.

Next day Jeanette dressed superbly, ordered the best carriage and pair, and drove from the front door, with coachmen and footman, to the Safe Deposit Depot, where, fortified with a forged order—she was an expert writer—she obtained Marjorie's safe box, which contained her jewel casket, and brought them to me.

The jewels were magnificent—priceless pearls, emeralds, diamonds, sapphires, rubies, and an Indian blood stone. A beautiful necklet of black opals, guarded with African blue diamonds, a lock of her father's hair, her mother's first

love letter to the father, a well-worn telegram announcing the birth of Marjorie, her mother's marriage lines, Marjorie's birth certificate, and a hundred and one family mementoes were boxed together.

I gathered the jewels, and placed all the other articles back in the casket. Then I told Jeanette she had better return the tin box intact as it was found, but minus the jewels. She obeyed, poor child. She was just lovely—a strong pal. I was now loaded with jewels and money. The next thing was to make a break-away. But I did not like to leave Jeanette, poor helpless creature. Of course, marrying her was out of the question. I must not mar my prospects by such a silly consummation. Still, I must keep good with her. She might grow cold and have me pinched by the police, in her anger. It's only one step, they say, from love to hate. I was not prepared to allow Jeanette to take that step. No, not yet. Her spirit must be further subdued. She must be made more and more dependent upon my smiles. Her life was now to be mixed with mine, but not by marriage. She must be content with second place.

Still, who knows what fate has in its store-house for us? I did love this sweet girl, but I also loved and harboured the thought of Marjorie's fortune. I felt confident of Marjorie coming into my hands again—and that would be the end of her if I could but see her again. Such thoughts tormented. But my great consolation was the bulk of Marjorie's jewels. How Father Abraham's eyes would glisten when he looked upon the jeweller's shop I had for him! No luggage rat, now.



CHAPTER XIX.—LOVE AND LOOT.

JEANETTE was still happy in her passion, albeit rather peevish and apprehensive of her future. News had been received that Marjorie was far from well. Her hysteria had assumed an alarming aspect, necessitating her being placed in a private hospital. Her mother would not leave her, so she, too, poor soul, was detained, thank Heaven. George was waiting in London for the arrival of a Russian Grandee, who had his pockets full of orders for pickled pork and tinned sausages, which he could hand out to whom he pleased.

So the Chicago home of the Hampdens was now my happy hunting ground. Jeanette and I entertained the Chief of Police at dinner. I presented his wife with a diamond pendant—one of Marjorie's, re-set. The old chap and his "missus" were, of course, delighted. I told him of my adventure with the Black Hand. He advised me to be careful.

Jeanette and I spent our days motoring; our evenings went well into the morning, in our little snuggerly on the verandah. She was all love, all importunings for the marriage, all whisperings as to the future. Sometimes she cried, and was sad and moody. Poor Jeanette! She had feasted too ravenously on the first fruits of love. She was now mine. My slightest word was law. The marriage I put off, for prudent reasons. My thoughts were how I would break with her—get away.

One night, when she was clinging to me with the power of a wounded tigress, I said, "My pet, you must be careful of the valuables in this house. You are in honour bound to take the greatest care of them. Do you see that safe, with the silver and

plate securely locked?" It was my profession to find out how other folks guarded their valuables.

"Oh, Duncan, why do you chide? I see everything locked and secured. The iron safe off the drawing-room is secure, and it fairly groans under the weight of silver, old gold trophies, and old money. I am careful. See, here, is the key."

"Show it to me," I said, "Let me see it."

I examined it carefully, played with it, and said, "It is safest that you 'plant' it nightly."

After that we nightly embedded the key in the earth of one of the verandah flower pots. It was placed and rested there, but it did not *rust* there. Nights thus passed; days dragged out. I wanted to get away, but, on the slightest hint of my departing, Jeanette went clean mad. If I went, I should go over her dead body. Nice prospect! Any love is bad, but mad love is the devil.

At last, the spell of the nights on the verandah was broken. A telegram from George announced his return within ten days. The house was to be put into order; the painters were to be requisitioned. Jeanette was sick at the news. She kept her room for two whole days. The second night she sought me out to be petted. She retired early. The doctor, acting on my advice, gave her a sleeping draught. All was now hushed. I decided to strike a blow at the gorging wealth of the Hampdens. Marjorie was in a private Hospital, and might never re-enter the outer world. Jeanette was ill, and most persistent in her demand for a marriage that could never take place. I must look after myself; the provident youth who provided for the sundown of his life, was, the scripture informs us, blessed. I intended to empty the safe

and put up a job of burglary on the painters, the servants, Jeanette, or anyone else—so long as I escaped.

Divested of cumbersome clothes, my feet in my noiseless slippers, my hands carefully gloved—a provision against finger prints—I entered the room where the safe stood. Carefully locking each door behind me and drawing the blinds, I opened the safe. A glitter, as of a silversmith's shop, met my gaze. I examined the contents, bit by bit, sorting, so to speak, the sheep from the goats, the chaff from the grain, the silver from the plated, and thus I secured a full hundredweight. Then I turned my attention to the coin and old stamps. Both were valuable. These I took '*en globo*.' An old-fashioned brooch, set in pearls and rubies, with hair showing through a glass in the centre, was not refused. A small gold cup—a prize the ancient father of the family had won at the Paris '79 Exhibition, for the best show of pressed beef. This I pressed into my bag, the gaping mouth of which seemed to have adopted the Oliver Twist impertinence of "asking for more."

Securely locking the safe—leaving everything as I found it (outside that iron receptacle)—I made for my room, along the dark passage, and up the stairs. Cautiously taking every step, I gained my room with half the booty; the other half I could not carry. I felt like Macbeth, who cried, "I'll go no more." Yet I went, and landed the rest of the "swag" securely in my room, locked all the doors, drew the blinds, "planted" the silver, for the time being, and went to sleep, to dream the happy dream of a tradesman at his art—the art of a professional thief.

CHAPTER XX.—BLUEY DESERTS JEANETTE.

THE next day, and the next, were employed by me, at intervals, in "planting" the booty. It was a splendid haul. What would Father Abraham say? Would he now call me a luggage rat or a top knotcher? Marjorie's jewels would make his old, hard, dry, and chapped lips moist for a full week. Such strings of pearls! Emeralds so large! £50,000 worth, in one fell swoop! Then the solid silver! But how to get away with it?

On the second morning after the safe opening I was down late, being busy in my room on my own. The servants knocked, and knocked again. At last, I answered lazily, as though I had just awakened. "Would Mr. St. Clair come to the drawing room? Miss Jeanette was importunate, and wished to see him immediately."

"What dust storm is now blowing our way?" I mentally queried. I looked at the clock on the mantelpiece; the hour of eleven would strike within a few minutes. I had been a laggard in my room, but I was at work—planting the spoil.

I descended into the hall, thence into the drawing room. Jeanette was at a small round card table. Her head rested on it. Her hair was loosened by the wind that gushed through the open window which looked out on to the lawn, the air fresh and perfumed by the gentle rains that had fallen during the night.

Was Jeanette ill, or dead? Had she taken poison? Her desperate nature and passion knew no bounds

when they reached their hurricane stage. I gently tapped her on the shoulder.

"Jeanette!" I said.

She raised her face to mine. Oh! what a sight met my gaze! Had she gone mad?

"Jeanette! Jeanette!" I said, in alarm, "Why, child, what's the matter?"

Her eyes were like two fire-balls. They were dimmed with scalding tears. Her hair tossed about, dancing delight in its freedom from the bands that had held it in bondage. Her face was a sickly white—the colour had fled from her lips and she looked like one preparing to shuffle off this moral coil that binds us with steel chains to the miseries of the world.

"Jeanette, speak! What's the matter? Speak to me," I implored. "It's Duncan."

"Duncan, yes, Duncan," she murmured, smiled a sickly smile, and half shook her head.

I drew her to me, enfolded her in my arms, and kissed her cold, white forehead again and again. At last she viced her arms about my neck, and, throwing her head with full force on my breast, exclaimed with the deepest depth of anguish, "Oh! Duncan, Duncan, we are lost! The door of doom is sealed for ever against us. There is no hope, no mitigation of the sentence. It is recorded in the book of fate, and heaven itself cannot alter it. Oh! Duncan, I am unprepared to die. You know," she whispered in my ear, "how unprepared."

"Yes, yes, Jeanette, I know, and I'll stick to you to the end, but for pity's sake who is going to die?"

"You and I, Duncan. Our doom is sealed in the book of fate."

"Oh, drat the book of fate," I said, with impatience. "If they bring any book of fate within my grasp, I'll burn it. Why, girly, my little wifey, you are surely dreaming of these evil designs. It's your blood-curdling 'Italiano-Dago-Knife-Brigade' that has crushed your spirits and frightened you."

"It's the truth of their resolve that has frightened me. Read, Duncan!"

Now, it was my turn to turn pale. The document she handed to me was headed with a design of cross bones and skull, and it ran thus:—

Mademoiselle,—You were a full member of our pure and human society. You were for years fed, clothed, educated, protected, loved, and trusted by every member, and all that was asked of you for our manifold kindnesses was loyalty to our principles and our meagre commands. You have been disloyal, consorting with and giving our secrets to a known enemy. Every act of your episodes at midnight on the verandah, your resolve about the key of the strong room, your hesitated action about the jewels, all confirm us that you are a double-dyed traitress; therefore our Brotherhood, with pain and sorrow, and in dead silence, passed the sentence of death on you last night. The sentence will be carried out immediately. Think not to escape. You are about to die; therefore never pray more. With tears for you and joy for the friends of our Brotherhood, the President signed your death knell.

PIRON, President.

This epistle nearly took my breath away, and I could not help being alarmed at Jeanette's fright, but said, "Oh! you little goose. A few days we shall be gone. Yes; gone for ever."

Jeanette looked up, saying, "There's a letter for you, Duncan, in the same hand."

I tore open the envelope. The letter ran:—

Bluey Grey, otherwise St. Clair,—You tried, by false reports, to encompass the death of one of our trusted brethren. You have been, and are, a thief. You have even dared to interfere with our charge. You are, at this moment, in illicit dealing with a child of the Guild—Jeanette. For these sins you are fined 20,000 dollars, which amount is to

be paid to our trusted officers not later than Saturday next. Failing compliance, you will be speedily sent to your death, with all your sins upon your head.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE GLORIOUS BLACK HAND.

I explained to Jeanette that my letter was similar to hers. I brushed her hair back, wiped the traces of tears from her eyes, playfully kissed her, and led the way to the dining room, where the servants were impatient for our coming to breakfast.

After a good meal, and much considering, I resolved on a line of action. To-day was Wednesday. Saturday was my day of pay up, or be damned for all time. Jeanette's letter made reference to the key of the safe and to Marjorie's jewels. After breakfast I took Jeanette for a stroll in the garden. It was a lovely cool day. Everything looked gay. All the flowers and shrubs were in holiday raiment.

Picking a bud here, a leaf there, hopping over a newly-formed bed, and generally rambling through bowers of flowers and foliage, I casually said to Jeanette, who was now regaining her courage, "Promise me one thing. You'll keep that letter those dogs have sent you in your bosom, day and night."

She promised, by turning her back on me in well-assumed modesty, placed the death sentence in her bosom, and said, "It's planted near my heart. There it will remain until you yourself demand it."

"Now, Jeanette," I said, "I want you to be a brave little girl."

She stared, as though by instinct she could read my mind.

"Yes," I continued, "be brave! We must get out of this place, and at once."

She smiled assent, and asked "How?"

I pretended to think hard. I had already made

up my mind. At last, as though a brilliant thought had struck me, with the force of a well-burnt brick, I said, "I have it, Jeanette; I have it."

She was silent.

"I have it! I'll go away under a well-assumed disguise, and you can follow, in like manner. Say, by Sunday night's train we can meet in New York. Take rail to Canada, thence by boat to the land of peace and plenty—Australia."

Jeanette hid her head on my shoulder, saying, "Don't leave me Duncan! Oh! don't leave me. I am so helpless without you. We can get away together, somehow. Don't leave me here! If you do, I have a fearful presentiment that we shall never meet again."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" I said, in a ruffled manner, "You must be led by me. I'll rule, Jeanette, for our very safety; so be reasonable. Come, come! You'll spoil everything with your tears, your complaints, and your continued protestations. Cheer up, my wifey."

"Duncan, you forget how helpless I am. You forget——"

I frowned and said, "I forget nothing."

After hesitating a moment, she said, "Well, there, I'll banish sorrow, and follow your advice, although my heart abhors the separation. Come! There, Duncan, you see I am now cheerful. Unfold your plans!"

As she was getting good, and I saw hopes of getting away, I was, of course, quick off the mark with my proposition, which was simplicity itself for me, but not for Jeanette. Poor girl!

"Well," I commenced, "I'll go by to-night's train to New York."

"Oh! No, no! Not to-night, Duncan, not to-night!" she interrupted, in a state of frenzy. Your doom will not be current until Saturday. Oh! Stay with me until Friday night's train. Do, Duncan!"

"As you wish, my love. Well, on Friday night I'll go to New York, disguised as a nurse."

"A nurse!" she echoed, with a wan smile.

"Yes; as a nurse or as an old lady, which you will. You must get the rig-out of clothes for me. I think the old woman get-up would be better. You have some theatrical wigs, and your clothes will nearly fit me. I'll go, thus disguised. Take my luggage with me. Once in New York you can follow me there, and we'll start for Canada and Australia. This house will probably be watched. I'll get my belongings and disguise together. You order one of the open carriages to drive me to the station. I'll inform our friend, the Chief of Police, and a strict watch will be kept on the movements of the Black Hand. Once I am away, they'll have lost their prize, and will not bother about you. It's not useless blood they care to shed; it's money they are after. Now, don't you agree that my plans are good?"

She stared intently at a burglar bee stealing the honey out of an innocent flower beyond, and acquiesced by nodding her head. She was fairly solid now. So I kissed her and left to inform the police, in case of trouble. The Chief quite agreed with my resolve. I gave him 500 dollars to distribute amongst the poor, secretly. I know the poor box it went into! Packing up, I completed my arrangements. All was ready. The eventful night arrived. The separation with Jeanette was painful. At last, worn out with her entreaties, her

love and the vehemence of her importuning me not to desert her, the poor girl broke up. Why will women love so madly? Poor devils! They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind.

Our fervent "Good-bye!" being over, I prepared to dress for the part I was to play. I was soon in the skirts, half crinoline, dress, shawl, and bonnet of Madam de Van. One of the under stable grooms on the place helped me to don my attire, giggling all the time. The boxes, "ports," and bags being secured in the carriage, that vehicle of luxury was driven to the front door, and "Madam de Van" entered the carriage with much grace, and—I think they call it—deportment. Jeanette was at the window. She smiled through her tears, as she kissed both hands to me. The footman booked my luggage and obtained my ticket. A 25-dollar bill each for the servants kept them good and sweet, and put a knot in their tongues.

The Chief of Police was on the platform, which was crowded. There were no suspicious characters about as I ascended the Pullman car. I took my seat in the ladies' end. The Chief of Police sauntered along the corridor, got a quiet word unobserved with me, and whispered, "You have a free run. None of the scoundrels are here. Your exit is unsuspected. I am afraid for Jeanette. She must be protected. I am afraid they will kill her. Let me know if you strike anything at New York races worth putting 100 dollars on. Good luck! Good-bye!"

The train puffed, screeched, puffed again, and then set up a rattle and vibration which plainly told me that I was leaving Chicago at a fifty-mile-an-hour speed.

CHAPTER XXI.—A BLACK HAND MURDER.

ON arrival at New York I saw on the board, "Telegram for Madam de Van." I got it, and gave the boy a nickel. The message was brief, but to the point. It read:—

Your departure discovered. I am ill. Love. JEANETTE.

In my old maid's disguise, I got to an hotel, somehow. The Ocean Atlantic Liners did not leave for London until Monday mid-day. I kept myself secluded, took my meals in my own room, and shocked the attendants by drinking a bottle of wine at a sitting, and several bottles when I was not sitting. All being ready to depart on Monday I wired Jeanette:—

Leave for London to-day. It's best. Cable and write me to the Cecil. Love. All love. DUNCAN.

I still kept my disguise on the boat, and when at sea kept my cabin, feigning sickness. I strolled the deck only at night time, for air. There I encountered a good-looking youth about 21 years of age, of the "swell spieler" type. He took quite an interest in me—an old maid—and offered me his arm for a walking contest on the deck. He talked of his home, his dear mother, his sisters, and brothers. He fooled around, night after night, watching and waiting for me. At last, I simply asked him if he had ever been in love.

How surprised he looked! Poor thing! No, he had never loved. His mother would not let him. I told him I had never loved, although I could well

afford to keep a husband, as I had more ready cash at home than an ordinary fat bullock could drag up a hill. We sat in a darkened secluded spot on the upper deck, near the funnel, generally called the lover's "squattez-vous" ground. After much persuasion and proper maidenly reflection, I allowed him to kiss me, and he breathed whispering tales of love into my ear, with a deep odour of cloves. I'll swear he was on the hunt for my pocket—the way he grabbed at my petticoat. I let him go. At last, after a desperate fumble, he said he hoped I did not venture to carry money about me on these questionable steamers. I assured him that my money was at home. If he could lend me a few pounds until Southampton was sighted I would hold him dear. This knocked him off his perch. He at once remembered that he had a friend to see in the steerage about a dog, and would call back when the moon had got tired and gone to bed. I saw him once, years after, in the dock of the Old Bailey, where he was charged with robbing a nurse girl in one of the parks.

I landed in London without any further flirting or encountering any dangers to my good name or pocket, took a four-wheeler, and drove straight to Father Abraham's sanctum. He sent down a message that he did not want to see "any old vimmins." At last, after I had banged my "broly" on the counter and threatened to create a disturbance, he exclaimed, in a voice that could be heard down two flights of stairs, "Show her up! Show her up!"

As I bounded into the parlour, throwing my gingham on the floor and fixing my eyes on his cold hard steely face, I said, "Suppose I show you up?"

He rose, and fairly screamed, "Vat? Vat? In

my own parlour, too! Are you mad, my good voman? Have all the Pedlam 'ouses thrown open dare doors? Vat you vant? Speak!"

"What I want is Bluey Grey," I hissed.

"Bluey Grey! Vy my good voman, he's hanged long ago for murder on the high seas. If he ain't hanged, he ought to be. Bluey Grey is not here, my good voman; try Dartmoor or Portland."

"It's false, false!" I thundered, flinging off my bonnet, veil, and wig.

"Vat? Vat my good—Vy you young dorg. Vat you mean? I don't like this play. Vat you want? Quick! Vere haf you been? I suppose the bolice is after you? Any luck, any luck?" Then he scowled, and fell back into his chair with a heavy thud. I could see he was out of temper.

When I told him of the swag I had on board the four-wheeler, his eyes resumed their animation. The boxes, bags, "ports." were all brought in. Those containing the silver, stamps, coin, and gold stuff were quickly opened. Then Marjorie's jewels were produced. The old man grinned a wide, broad grin, that made his thin lips thinner, and his yellow face more like old parchment than ever. The pearls in the necklaces seemed to burn their imprint into his hand. He played with them and examined them with his glasses. Then he minutely inspected all the other precious stones. Placing one hand upon my shoulder, while the other grasped my right hand, he looked me through and through, and said, "Bluey, vere haf you been? Oh, my boy, you are a living vonder. I always knew you would come out on top. We are friends from dis hour. Is dere any hurry for de disposal of de lot?"

I shook my head. "Not for a week or so. I'll

let you know if any danger signals are hoisted. Now I want to change this rig-out, and adopt another set of togs. Will you send on my luggage to the Hotel Cecil with one of your men, and engage a good, large, airy bedroom, with sitting room adjoining, for Mr. Duncan St. Clair?"

This was soon done. An hour later I was strolling down Fleet-street, well pleased with myself. I made my way to my rooms at the hotel, to dress and prepare for dinner and the theatre. Later, at night, there came a tap-tap, at the door. "Telegram from New York, for you, Sir. It's a repeated message, so we paid nineteen shillings on it."

I gave him the money and told him to keep the change. Then I tore open the envelope and read:—

Council have decided to have you followed and the extreme penalty inflicted. What will you do? I am so unhappy. When do you leave New York? Love.

JEANETTE.

I looked at the date. It arrived in New York the day after I left Chicago. Jeanette did not know then that I was going to London. So the Black Hand was on my track! However, I was in a country where liberty and order and fair play were to be had for the asking; so I intended to stand my ground and meet the enemy. I spent the morning loitering about the hotel, playing billiards, getting good with the messengers and waiters, and splashing half-sovereigns around freely. Gold talks in every tongue in London, dear old London—the pawnshop of the world.

The room I occupied was an expensive one. From its windows there was a panoramic view of the Thames. A telephone from the general office

was attached; so I could rest in bed and telephone all over the place.

The next morning I was at breakfast alone, waiting for the approach of my waiter with my grilled chicken and buttered asparagus, coffee, and dry toast. I carelessly picked up "The Chimes," and leisurely opened it. I disliked reading papers, but one has, perforce, to read the Criminal Court proceedings, and keep in touch with the profession. My eye caught a big heading, with headed paragraphs beneath. My attention was riveted to it. It ran:—

THE BLACK HAND'S VENGEANCE.
FEARFUL TRAGEDY.

CHICAGO, Sunday Night.

What appears to be one of the most cold-blooded and brutal murders that have been recorded, even in America, took place to-night within the walls of the lovely garden of Mrs. Hampden's estate, two miles from Chicago. The whole circumstances are, as yet, wrapped in mystery, or partly so. One thing is sure, that a young lady, refined, and beautiful—Jeanette Bossoni—was done to death by being stabbed to the heart with an Italian stiletto, which was found, blood-stained, near the body.

It is known that the murderers were members of the Black Hand, as the emblem of the Council of this accursed organisation was firmly branded on the body, with the subtle information, written in blood, that the young lady so killed was a traitress to the Cause. The police are making investigations.

The Chief of Police, when questioned, was reticent, and would only say that his suspicions for some time had been that the murdered girl was in the power and grip of the members of the Black Hand. More than that he would not at present say.

LATER.

Letters have been found on the dead body of the murdered girl, Jeanette Bossoni, disclosing that she was in communication with members of the Black Hand, although her culpability is doubted. One letter shows that she was forced to give the gang the key to the safe, and to forge an order for the gang to obtain

the valuable jewels of Miss Marjorie Hampden, the value of which is supposed to be £60,000 to £70,000.

Little doubts exist in the public mind that the Black Hand is possessed of the jewels and plate. The police are making a strict investigation.

I threw the paper down, deserted my breakfast, ordered my hat and stick, and walked with a hurried step to the nearest cable office, where I despatched the following wire:—

Chief Police, Chicago.—Press announces distressing news Jeanette's death. Poor child complained often to me that the weight of the heavy heel of the Black Hand was on her. Lately she was doubly distressed, and talked absent-mindedly of an order being forced from her for some wrong purpose. Kindly cable me collect any further developments to

DUNCAN ST. CLAIR, Hotel Cecil.

Late that night I received the following cable from the Chief of Police:—

Thanks cable. Fact fully demonstrated. Black Hand compelled Jeanette sign order for jewels; also give key safe. We are searching for stolen property. All ports are watched. Man named Antonio has gone in search of you. Be careful.

I replied at once to Chief of Police:—

Kindly cable police here to afford me any protection necessary I fear the murderers.

ST. CLAIR.

To this I received the following reply:—

Have wired police as desired.



*Bluey and Antonio-
meet at - the lift gate*

CHAPTER XXII.—ANTONIO'S DROP.

AN officer of the police came to see me the next day, and it was arranged with the hotel manager that a full description of any suspicious characters wanting me should be telephoned to my room.

The police officer was extremely kind. I offered him wine. "No, thank you." "Cigars?" "No."

"Then, a little present?" "No, the country pays me," he said, smiling, "and we are only earning our money by protecting law-abiding citizens." We shook hands. I drove to Father Abraham to see that the "swag" was secure. I told him the full "strength" of the affair. He shook his head.

"Bluey," he said, admiringly, "you vas a living vonder. I hope you von't die out of your bed, dancing a jig at the end of a rope," he said.

He nodded his old head, and grinned. We agreed to my "whack" of the spoil. I got £4,000 in English money. I was well ahead of the game, and if I could only dodge the knife or lead of Antonio, I would be as right as pie. Poor Jeanette! I had foreseen her fate. She loved too seriously. Fate urged her on to her destruction; mine, I suppose, it only postponed. Her spirit, poor lost one, was now providentially directed to my protection above.

I knew that Antonio would come, and I was preparing for him. I had not long to wait. About a week after the sad news of Jeanette's death, the telephone's "ting-ting" sounded. I answered. "Oh! a gentleman wishes to see me. . . . His descrip-

tion? Yes Yes, I will see him. Let him come up by the No. 3 lift. I'll meet him on the landing No, no, I am not afraid. . . . No, it is not necessary to send anyone with him. Let him come up in three minutes."

I hastened to No. 3 lift gate. I must be prepared—look ahead. I stepped back. Presently I heard the lift moving below. My heart beat. I was at the mouth of the lift, with a loaded stick, thick and heavy, in hand. It was one of those automatic lifts. You get in and touch a spring, then it delivers its burden, and descends for more human freight. It stopped, with a jerk, at my floor. There, sure enough, was Antonio's deadly face peering through the iron lattice work. The door opened, and we stood face to face. We were alone.

It was a terrible moment—the hour for one of us had come to depart this vale of tears. I grasped my stick firmly, and moved not an inch. He stood where the lift had left him, his back close to the iron lattice frame-work of the lift door. He was deadly pale, his lips quivered, his eyes assumed a haunted, flickering fire. He looked like a wild beast, waiting and watching for a spring.

"Well," I demanded. "What do you want with me?"

"Your death!" he replied, in a hoarse voice, the savage foam of a maniac oozing from the corners of his open mouth.

"Where is your authority to take my life?" I exclaimed. "What have I done to be butchered to death by your gang? Where is your authority?"

As Antonio fumbled in his breast pocket, I noticed the lift gate silently and slowly gliding back. The

catch had not held it. A few moments later the gate was open fully a foot—and the gap was slowly, but surely, widening. Antonio's back was within a few inches of the retreating gate.

Now, or never! Whilst his hands were engaged, I pressed on him with my loaded stick, and was in the act of bringing it down with a crash on his head, when he retreated an inch or two, and lost his balance. He threw up his hands to defend himself, and was moving backwards, when—there was a screech—a heavy thud on the top of the idle lift below—a crash—a groan. Antonio had joined poor Jeanette.

Of course, it was a pure accident. The letter authorising Antonio to kill me lay upon the floor. I secured it, and sauntered down to the hotel vestibule, where the body was carried. The police were sent for, and took charge of it. They also took statements from myself and others, and I took a four-wheeler and sent the following cable to the Chief of Police, Chicago:—

Murderer Antonio came to-day to demand my death.
Showed me authority from Black Hand. Fell down lift well.
Was killed. Please telegraph police here his antecedents.

ST. CLAIR.

At the inquest letters of instructions to destroy me were read, and a verdict of "Accidental death" was recorded.

Poor Jeanette was avenged. Antonio was in agreement, I suppose, with the devil. I was free—still, Bluey Grey. In the fateful three minutes Antonio had been kept below I tampered with the catch of the lift gate, and so assisted to give the devil his own.

As I had foreseen, the theft of Marjorie's jewels,

and the plate in the old house had been credited to the Black Hand. Marjorie—thanks to her being a little fool—was in the private asylum.

I hated London, after the affair of the lift. Night and day I could see the accursed leer and grin on Antonio's face—at night he would be close, close to me, staring into my face with his fearful eyes. Evidently, I was weakening in my profession. Jeanette's death weighed upon my mind and disturbed my understanding. I could not concentrate my thoughts. I feared the end of most thieves when they lose their "blocks" (heads)—Portland or Dartmoor.

After a turn at the music halls I threw off my despondency. After all, I reflected, I was rich, young, and capable of having a good time of it. So I decided to turn the game up, do nothing more on the "blind," but go straight. That was my mind. Yes; I hated the whole business.

The hotel officers sent up a letter for me from the Chicago Chief of Police. He was most affable, chatty, and confidential, and wound up his letter with a postscript, saying that Miss Marjorie Hampden had returned to her home in Chicago, apparently quite well, but very thin. She often asked him, when alone, what had become of Mr. Duncan St. Clair. He concluded by asking me when I proposed to visit the "Town of Tinned Sausage."

The letter shook as I read and re-read it. Marjorie well in her home—asking for me. Was the officer who wrote so fondly, her bearer of love's hint? Asking for me!

I sank into a large divan chair by the casement window, and gazed far beyond, where the turbulent

water of the Thames gurgled past pier and boat, surging with its endless and monotonous moan, on . . . on . . . to its destination. Was the news of Marjorie's recovery, of her asking for me, a messenger sent at the earnest prayer of my dead sister, my beloved Daisy, whose last lines to me were:—

When I go to that land where happiness is alone found, I'll pray to the God of the Universe for my wayward brother, Bluey.

Poor Daisy ! Poor white-faced child—was she now praying for me?

Surely, there is some good in every man. Surely, there was some good in me. I treated Marjorie only as one would treat a lone bird one did not want to lose. I singed her wings, but was ready with reparation—marriage. With Jeanette—poor Jeanette!—it was different. She went into love's slaughterhouse, blindfolded—she, poor child of the Revolution, was done to death. Poor Jeanette !

Thus I sat alone in my sumptuous quarters at the hotel, not noticing the hours flit by. Time was of no moment to me. I was day-dreaming of Marjorie—and her money !

How every move in that old rustic shrubbery on that eventful night came back to my memory until I fancied I felt Marjorie's hot breath warm up the passions' glow that possessed my cheeks. I felt myself once again with the child in my strong grasp—a grasp of death; death to her fate in that mid-night meeting. I gave an involuntary start. I thought Marjorie's sweet breath was at that moment playing on my face. I shuddered, rose with a start—and,

“ Oh ! Good H——! Countess! *You* here? Why

—how you startled me! Where did you spring from? How came you here?"

"So you're love-sick, Bluey! Goosey, goosey, gander! Why, Bluey, I have been at your shoulder, reading that letter in your hand these fifteen minutes! You've been reading and re-reading, and mumbling to yourself for pity only knows how long. Oh! Bluey, Bluey! You're a full disgrace to the profession! *You* in love!" was the happy sally of The Countess.

For it was, indeed, The Countess.

The brightness of her looks, the healthy, sparkling happiness of her merry laughter called me instantly out of my dreamland, and dumped me down with an unruly thud into practical London.

I turned up the lights, closed the door, gazed at the lovely Countess one instant only, then caught her in my strong arms, gave her a rough squeeze, closed her lips and the doors of her complaints with a kiss, and said:

"Lena, forgive me, old girl, I'll be your pal. Yes! your pal, your Bluey. But don't scold me; don't whack me with your tongue. Here! Bite me, but don't *jaw* me!"

She smiled, through tears of joy. I won. She was mine. I burnt the letter about Marjorie, forgot Jeanette, dressed for dinner, at which The Countess joined me, and afterwards we went to the opera.

The next day I was her friend and companion, safe within the strong walls of her lovely country home, Laidley Park. There I abandoned myself to love; to the open air, to long walks over the daisy-and-buttercup-clad fields, riding about, driving Lena out, and generally leading a happy and quite contented life, such as the "true nobility" of the

nation live—those who till the soil, and lead virtuous and pure lives away from the society hells of London! Yes, I was happy!

Lena was a right sort of chum—a real, good pal. At last I proposed marriage to her. She laughed me off my legs. She was the devil to fathom. Some mystery was hanging over Lena. What it was I could not find out. She would never tell me.

One day, when our happiness was at its height, she received a telegram from Father Abraham, calling her to London at once.

She went. I remained at home to watch the house, and incidentally watch the cook—a pretty country wench, with a bloom on her face, like the summer blush on a ripe peach.

Lena returned the next day, thoughtful, cold, and grumpy. She said, shortly and sharply, "Bluey, we have had our holiday. Straighten yourself up. We leave here in two days. So, get into harness."

"Oh, burn the harness!" I said.

"Come, Bluey, you must not kick over the traces!" she replied, "We must be moving."

"Where?" I asked.

"Full steam ahead to New York!"

"Oh, *blow* New York!" I replied. "Things have been going very smoothly here. Why break up the happy home?"

"Bluey, you're a fool! Sovereigns don't grow on apple-trees. Come! Obey orders. Remember, you're my pal, but I am the boss when we are fielding. Come! Shake yourself up!"

CHAPTER XXIII.—BLUEY AT NEW YORK.

THE COUNTESS broke up her happy home at Laidley Park, and set sail for New York. I accompanied her as manager of her general affairs and confidential agent. But she reposed no confidence in me, or any one else. She was a curious mixture, but to try to stop her, or take her out of her own course—well, you might as well try to stop an 80-horse-power motor car by the force of a spring chicken.

The Countess assured me, when we were embarking, that it was quite a respectable tour she was on, and that nothing in the way of thieving must take place *en route*. She had some well planned big job on, but she would not then worry me with details. She determined to give herself up, she said archly and with one of her up-to-date smiles, to a holiday of love-making abroad. A nice prospect in store for me. What had I done to warrant such a sentence? Still, I was in the game, and had to keep my end up.

When we landed in New York I determined to go to a hotel on my own. I built a tale on her, that it would not be quite the thing for a beautiful Countess to be housed in a top-knotch hotel with her lover, and, no matter how much it pained me, the separation, for form's sake, must be observed.

Her quick eye and keen glance tried hard to fathom the inner meaning of my desire, but I came through the ordeal all right, and The Countess went to the Grand National Hotel.

I stayed some little distance from the heart of the City, at a swell place, beautifully situated in its own grounds and more like a gentleman's residence of the mid-Victorian era than an American hotel. A spacious bedroom, a large sitting room with a small smoke room adjoining, bathroom and lavatories, with a western angle to the verandah, comprised my snug compartments.

Here I intended to try the rest cure. For men of twice my inches and ten times my physique would sadly want the rest cure after four months' hot and strong love making with The Countess. I can compare that woman to nothing more appropriate than the finest quality of dry champagne. You first admire the bottle; you speculatively consider the nature of the wine itself; you decide to try it; and, after the first gulp, you are content to sip the remainder, in a state of ecstasy. The insidious liquor inflames your imagination and multiplies, by the table of ten, your desires, whilst diminishing your capacities until, punished and poisoned, you fall a prey to that which promised only pleasure.

I had hardly settled down in my comfortable quarters when I received an urgent message from "her ladyship" to wait on her at her hotel. Denial or refusal would be futile. I was to hasten to her side, or she would hasten to mine. Of the two evils I chose the lesser.

CHAPTER XXIV.—THE COUNTESS'S STORY.

ON arriving at The Countess's hotel, I was ushered into her presence in a splendid drawing room. She had engaged the choicest room, set with richly-gilded mirrors, magnificent hangings, thick Turkish carpets, soft lounges, shaded lights of a delicate canary colour, a profusion of flowers, and everything else needed to suggest wealth and comfort. The Countess was attired in a rich, flowing costume of the latest Parisian style; diamonds glistened in her hair and on her well developed, but now highly-disturbed bosom. She walked the room with measured and agitated steps. Her eyes sparkled with a darkened fire; her cheeks were aglow with agitation. She looked imperious and beautiful, but it was the beauty of a wild cat or of a wounded forest tigress.

I saw at once that something desperate had shaken her very heart strings. I said to myself, "Bluey, you had better go 'garchley' (slowly). This woman is desperate, my boy, desperate—and there is little or no difference between a desperate woman and the very devil."

"What could it be about?" I thought, "Is she jealous, or has somebody robbed her?" I took her hand, which was moist and hot, and soothed it as best I could. I explained to her, with sobs in my voice, that it was a fool who brought her message.

I led her to a cushioned seat, and, holding her as tightly as I could in my arms—considering the

broken down state of my health—I soothed her, and asked her to make me her confidant, her friend, her chum, and tell me all about it—what the trouble was, and if I could help her I would.

“Now, what is the trouble?” I asked. “If you don’t speak out, I will go. I will not stay here. Tell me all about it. What is it? What has happened? Speak Lena! You know I love you.”

For a few moments she was silent. Then—as the whirlwind had taken another backward course—she said in a loud tone, laughing the while, in a high state of hysteria, “I am a fool! Yes, an infernal fool, worse than a fool, a damned idiot. What can he, the gaol bird, do to me? Nothing.”

She had disentangled herself from my embrace, and, again marching the floor and clasping her hands tightly behind her back, proceeded, through her clenched teeth, “Nothing, nothing, he can do nothing to me, he is a gaol bird—he is worse.” She paused and stared at me.

“Who in the name of all the pots at once are you talking about?” I asked.

“Give me some brandy,” she said.

When she had drained the glass she locked the door.

“Well, for pity’s sake, what does all this fooling mean?” I asked.

Reclining on the floor, with her head resting on my knee, whilst I patted her hot and throbbing temples, she said, “Bluey, I will tell you all. You are now to me everything that is left in this world. You must stick to me to the end. I will cling closer and closer to you as difficulties and years cling closer to me.”

Here was a pretty prospect for me.

"Well, go on! Don't stop in the middle of a yarn," I remarked, diplomatically.

"I have seen him to-night," she said, fiercely.

"Seen whom?" I asked.

"My husband," was her reply.

"Oh, him!" I said impatiently. "I thought you had seen the devil himself. Well, now that you have seen your husband, I suppose your husband has seen you. Is he alive or dead, or in or out of the stone jug?"

"He is alive, more's the pity," was her answer, in a solemn, measured tone, as though it came from an ancient sepulchre. "You don't know that man as I know him; he will stop at nothing. It is me, or my life, he wants; me, for preference, but if he cannot get me he will take my life."

She broke off, sprang from the floor, and paced the room as though she were in training for the constitutional stakes.

I made myself more comfortable, and watched her carefully. A crisis was surely appearing in this woman's life. Presently, she stopped, and threw herself into a chair by my side. With elbows firmly ducked into her thighs, her cheeks between her hands, her eyes riveted upon me, she said, "Look here, Bluey, old man! I am frightened, I am really frightened. I feel undone. I feel already that the game is up; I can hear them now hammering nail after nail into my coffin in the room below. The image of that man—his dark and threatening visage, his snake-like mocking eye—has simply curdled the blood around my heart, and brought me face to face with terrible possibilities. To-night or to-morrow may mean anything—every-

thing. Two disturbed souls, such as his and mine, cannot live long without combustion, even in a great city like New York. What I shall do and how I shall do it, heaven only knows! Up to to-night I was happy. Your company—I will not say your love, because I don't believe you ever loved anybody or ever will love anybody but yourself, your good spirits, your manly rallies, my own good health, good fortune, and splendid prospects ahead—all were crowding upon me with a promise of peace. Now, my hopes have been scattered as effectually as a hurricane would blow soap bubbles skyward. And all by that man, that one man, who has the power and the will to destroy me."

"I met him to-night," she added, rising from her chair, "face to face in the vestibule of this hotel. He stared at me for a moment—I nearly lost my balance—and he smiled, as Satan would smile when he sees his victim quivering before him. He raised his hat, and whispered, 'Madam is not well to-night. To-morrow I will wait upon her and pay her my respectful compliments.' I rushed past him, gained my room, locked the door, and sent for you."

"Well, now I am here," I said, "what do you propose? Not, I hope, that he may have a full opportunity of killing both of us. I don't see many points in being made a target of for some alleged grievance of this demented frog-eating husband of yours. Please, also, remember, Lena, that you are a full-grown woman. Why on earth can't you bear your troubles and stand up to them like a 'man' without bringing me into it. Let me finish my rest cure," I pleaded, "and then I don't mind

helping you to finish your husband." Having finished that oration, I pressed her to tell me the history of the trouble that worried her.

Raising her fore-finger, and commanding silence, she seated herself in an easy chair, and said, "Listen! Listen! My parents were good, honest people."

"They always are when they are dead," I chipped.

"My father," she went on, unheeding my interruption, "was an officer in the French Army, and his father fought with credit, under the first Napoleon, at the burning of Moscow."

"And his children have been living on credit ever since," I suggested. "What a pity he did not get burnt in Moscow—a lot of trouble would have been avoided!"

Again ignoring my interjection, she proceeded, "When he died, his son, my father, followed the family profession."

"Of legalised cut-throats?" I asked.

She nodded, and said, "My father was killed before the walls of Algiers."

"Thank heaven," I involuntarily muttered, "that some of the family have been killed. But, why before the walls of Algiers? Surely there was a back to the wall, and why get in front of the wall when you can get behind the wall?"

"Bluey, don't be silly," she said, impatiently. "This left my mother a widow with two young children, I the eldest. My mother was a delicate, inexperienced, pious, poor soul, who prayed for everything she wanted, and got nothing she prayed for. The only two things she knew how to do, and do well, were to pray and spend money. She adored her children and her country. I was a

child of ten, and we were in poverty and misery. Somehow or other, I was engaged to play in a pantomime. I remember, well, my first night before the footlights and the childish gladness that warmed my innocent young heart. Three or four years of utter drudgery followed on the stage. The miserable pittance I received I took home, with the light and airy step of the elastic buoyancy of youth, and threw the coppers, with a joyful jingle, into my poor mother's lap. Poverty and acute hunger had already taken possession of our home. My mother was helpless, and my young brother was too young to sell even matches on the streets.

“The tenement in which we lived was poor and miserable; the furniture and other little effects—personal trinkets of my mother's, of her mother's—went one by one, the way all such treasures go. It was only by the most painful efforts and the sparsely-doled-out charity of some of the powerful that kept our bodies and souls together. My earnings were very little. At last the crisis came, and my mother sank under the load of care, poverty, hunger, and disappointments, and of the unfulfilled promises that were whispered from time to time in her heart by the church functionaries. She died, a broken-hearted woman, whose bread-winner was killed in his country's wars. My brother was taken to be cared for by the State. I was then alone, indeed; little more than a baby girl, earning a few francs per week.

“A neighbour, with a kind heart but scant purse, gave me bed and shelter. At the theatre I improved slowly, very slowly. I spent all my spare time in educating myself and making wax flowers,

at which my good second mother, now my landlady and protector, was an adept.

"Being better fed and having warmer clothes, and being deeply impressed with the sad events that had now gone past for more than a year, I had commenced to pay attention to my personal appearance. My looks, demeanour, and gait attracted more than little attention. My parts on the stage were improved, and my salary increased. So, when I had reached my 17th year I had developed into knowledge and position and personal appearance.

"At this age my photo appeared, for the first time, in the "World's Dramatic News." I was designated as a young actress of some promise. Mademoiselle de Berne was my stage name. The gallery boys threw nosegays at me; and the fashionable section of the audience haughtily scrutinised me and watched my developments in a stiff and undemonstrative manner. Occasionally, trumpery presents or books or chocolates found their way to my room. I was often invited, with other girls, to supper after performances, but, for months and months, running into nearly two years, I stedfastly refused, for fear of offending my good foster-mother, who was a very religious and proper-minded woman, and who watched and advised me for my own future success and safety. She was fearful lest her beloved Lena should make the slightest stumble. Thus, in a dreamy, unconscious, innocent way my girlish days were spent. My understanding slowly developed, and I climbed the ladder of the theatrical profession, with its dangers and rotten rungs and dislocated sockets, until the top rung was almost in sight.



*The countess tells
her story*

"A special festival performance was being held. *Messieur le President* was present—all was excitement, all was joy. The old theatre resounded with applause. The piece chosen was, 'Elizabeth, Queen of England.' I played Mary Stewart.

"For the first time in my life, I was now filled with ambition. I acted splendidly. Mary Stewart lived again, in me. I felt it. Amid thunders of applause, I was called to bow my acknowledgment before the crowded theatre. My brain was in a whirl. My success was made doubly so by being taken by the hand before the audience by that great tragedian, Tallimarcho. A managerial supper followed. I must attend it. A denial would be bad form and bad grace, and would show a want of gratitude. So I despatched a hurried note to my good old grand-dame, who was waiting for me at home, dozing in her chair with the cat lazily by her side, and the coffee steaming on the hob, waiting for the return of her beloved Lena. Would that I had gone home that night and joined that sacred and undefiled household. Alas, alas! My destiny lay elsewhere!

"At the dinner I was too excited to eat, but I laughed and joked and received compliments from the giddy fools that hovered around me. In the excitement, I drank two glasses of champagne—my first taste of alcohol. Ugh! Would that it had been poisoned. The wine heightened my colour, made my eyes dance, and placed a full measure of vivacity into my conversational powers. The old girlish Lena was vanishing. A new Lena, with the passions of a petted woman, was blossoming.

"One of the visitors—a *Monsieur le Count Valleric*, a Russian nobleman—paid me marked attention.

He was young, handsome, a bright conversationalist, and had a happy, easy method of deporting himself. His laugh was simple and child-like. We became friends. It was vanity, or pride, or coquettishness, or all three combined, that first prompted me to allow him to pay me so much attention. A Russian Count of distinction waiting on me made the other girls, who were less fortunate, green with envy. They hated me. Woman, remorseless woman, has always hated me."

Poor Lena laughed a cruel, hard-hearted laugh as she spoke of her own sex. Continuing her story, she said, "The Count saw me home, and—after desperate importunings and vows of love, couched in language fragrant of sincerity and honour—kissed me "Good-night!" It was the fatal kiss, the kiss of death, for from that night that kiss deadened the past and opened up to me the whirlwind of the future. That night my dreams were wild and restless. My pillow was hard and hot, and seemed uncomfortable for a virtuous head to rest upon. The Russian Count, with his titles and grandeur, the splendour of his home, his family and lineage going back to the royal blood of Paul, his battles and his achievements, his sword, his victories, all mixed up in my disturbed slumbers.

"My theatrical success was now assured, my engagements extended, and my salary increased to bring me well within the circle of affluence. The Count paid me the most marked attention. He followed me everywhere I went. Not one night was he from my side when I returned home. I grew fond of him—a girlish hair-brained fondness. I thought, like most romantic, similarly placed idiots, that I loved. I pictured myself a Countess,

a coat of arms on my carriage, and taking my place of precedence amongst the Russian nobility.

"Once the Count had my girlish heart secure within his iron grasp, he proceeded to secure the bird by plucking it of its wings of virtue. Thus, maimed and singed, I could not fly from him, but must, for very safety, cling closer to him. My position on and off the stage became serious. Anguish and tears furrowed my cheeks and hollowed my eye sockets. My lover became cool and indifferent, and would leave for days without even seeing me. At last, in a half frantic state, I threatened him with destruction. With much condescension, he married me.

"I became a wife and a mother," she hissed. "Yet not nineteen years of age. My joy in being a wife and a Countess was short-lived, for my husband—the Count—treated me with studied civility for a time after baby was born, but afterwards with coldness and harshness, verging on cruelty. My position at the theatre was filled by others; my good looks had vanished. My baby was sick and weak. Want and desperation took possession of me. My husband had fallen into a chronic state of moneyless-ness. He had expectations, but, she laughed, they were like 'the mirage of the desert'—the further you went towards them, the further they receded. He taught me to steal," she half hissed, and half whispered, "Taught his wife, the mother of his child, to steal. I became a thief, at his bidding, and for the safety of my child's body and to secure his love I lost my soul."

"Thus we lived for two years, by my thieving and his gambling. Sometimes he gambled away that which I had stolen. The life was hell—hell upon

earth. At last the hand of the law laid its heavy grasp on me. I was arrested, convicted at Paris, and sentenced to two long years of agony, misery, and degradation in a French prison, there to herd with the vilest of the vile. In the depths of my misery, he, the viper amongst men," and as she uttered the words she rose and stood with hands clenched behind her back—"he deserted me. Yes, deserted me. Time is said to heal the deepest wound in a lacerated heart, but it calloused mine. I came out of durance vile, a monomaniac, declaring and swearing war on Society generally. I resolved never to think again of good or of honesty, but to play the part on the world's stage of one who is prompted and taught by the devil incarnate. I went to my foster-mother; the place was deserted. She had long since been embraced by death.

"My betrayer—the fiend whom the law recognised as my husband—had gone on a wild cruising tour with another actress, to the city of Boulogne. I sought him out, and, face to face, encountered him with his paramour. I demanded my child. He, with brutal plainness, referred me to the Paris cemetery. The storm between us was terrific. I made an attempt on his life, which would have proved successful, and have sent me and my troubles to the guillotine had it not been for the hand of a young officer who was standing by. He seized my arm, gently removed the knife from my grasp, and led me in a high state of hysteria from the room. I was arrested for attempted murder. The town was a military encampment. The military officers clubbed together for my assistance and defence. They soon learned the history of my seduction, marriage, and desertion. Thinking

discretion the better part of valour, my husband took to his heels.

“The Tribunal acquitted me, and again I found myself in a gay and vivacious city, full of excitement, novelty, and wealth—in poverty. What was I to do? Sit down and starve? Take to stealing again, and get hard labour? Or try to do hard work, and break down over the task? I boldly sought out the young officer who had stopped the knife from entering the vitals of my husband. I begged his compassion, his assistance. I exercised all my art on his young and manly disposition. He was a handsome man, rich, and belonged to ancient, aristocratic family. He was an officer of great repute in the Intelligence Department of War.

“With money and advice, he assisted me to Paris, where I, for a time, comfortably rested and regained my health and accustomed vigor. My joy was intensified to bursting point when I found, with my gallant officer’s assistance, the whereabouts of my beloved child. She was comfortably housed in a rustic convent some 12 leagues from Paris, and entered in the books as the daughter of the Count and Countess Valleric. My gallant knight of the Boulogne episode soon found an excuse to join me in Paris, and with spacious, though unpretentious apartments, he became my friend and my protector. No, not my lover; my love was dead. Gradually, but surely, I crept step by step, first by stealth and cunning, then by boldness and almost by right, into the inner circles of Parisian social and political life.

“As our social position grew stronger, my influence and that of my protector, became greater. So, in the midst of the gay surroundings, with elaborate dress and costly equipments, I became

the celebrated Countess Valleric. I had ascended the social ladder and stood balanced on the top rung, surrounded by diplomatists, intrigues, and schemes. And on that ladder I became powerful. Politicians of all shades of opinion assembled in my saloon; the ins of the day were the outs of to-morrow, and matters of the weightiest moment to the State were freely discussed. Opportunists sought me out and begged my favours.

"At one critical period, *Messieur le President* entrusted me with a secret commission of the gravest importance to the Russian Court, for which I received marked acknowledgment. My position was scarcely, if ever, assailed by the Press. My protector's social position, and my own ability and affability, silenced envious tongues. High play for high stakes became the ordinary every day occupation of my house. The foreign ambassadors bid high for my smiles and for my influence in official circles. No drawing room closed its doors against me. My health and my beauty returned, and so I was in the highest flight of luxury, and power, and greatness.

"After a time my brutal husband returned, like a blighted wind that had passed over a plague-stricken forest. Then, I discovered, for the first time, that he was no other than a disgraced nobleman—a foresworn Russian refugee, a Government paid spy on a band of patriots whose confidence he had gained by joining their league. His perfidy was found out, but not until the blood of the patriots had flown copiously beneath the Russian headman's axe. He escaped their vengeance by flight, but was tracked and followed. Indeed, at the moment he met me and ruined my life, he was

hovering, so to speak, under the very shadow of the dagger of retribution. He was being hunted, like a guilty devil, by his countrymen when for a miserable subsistence he plunged deeper into the mire by becoming a doubly, nay trebly, perjured villain, doing the bidding and conniving at the abominations of the ferocious Russian beauocracy."

"This then," Lena exclaimed, with greater energy and emphasis, "this was the tender nursery in which I trustfully placed my young love to grow and strengthen in honesty, in purity, and in womanliness and motherly love!"

Poor Lena! She bowed her head in agony, at the recollection of her early trials, and when she rose to look again at me she seemed as one dazed. I gave her a drink, she sipped it, and, still holding the glass, she continued: "My husband challenged my protector to a duel, and, being an expert shot, he killed my only pillar of safety."

As if to emphasise the dissolution of the brave young man who protected her, she dashed the frail glass into a thousand pieces on the floor.

"In that death," she added in softer and sadder tones, "that villain killed me, killed all semblance of remorse, all womanly feeling." Again she ceased speaking, and, for the first time, I saw tears in her great blue eyes, fringed with her long black lashes. Her heart had found her out. She loved that officer.

With one bound she was by my side, and, clinging to me, in a half frantic, half soothing tone, exclaimed passionately, "You are now to me everything; for God's sake take me away. Let us go at once, delay may mean murder. I will be a true and loyal woman to you. I will forget the past and all its horrors. We will hide the hideous

portions of our past lives away in the brightest corner of your beautiful Australia. There, amongst the sunshine, the birds, and the flowers of the wilderness we will live our lives for each other, and forget the dead past. Let us be gone at once, and so close the chapter of our wrong-doings. I have—ah, trust me!—I have a heart that can be good, a soul that can be purged of all its badness. Don't turn, with that incredulous smile on your face; don't push me back as though I were a leper. We have money enough, brains enough, and years enough before us to turn from the path of misery. I came here to this wretched city of sin, prepared—yes, prepared, Bluey, in every detail—to steal the jewels of one of America's brainiest women at the fashionable wedding that is to take place during the next few days. I told you nothing about it. I was sure that the details were so complete that failure would be impossible, and that the *coup d'état* would render us anything from £80,000 to £100,000. To-night I will destroy every semblance of this thieving proposition, and change my life and my very being if you will but say that one word, 'Yes.' If you will but say 'Lena, I will take you.' ”

Thus she pleaded, clinging to me in a paroxysm of grief, of fear, and of love—no, not love; not love.

Her history, and her sudden collapse and unrestrained appeal, unnerved me and left me almost in a stupor. From my soul I pitied her, pitied the beautiful pleading woman. Her miseries and the wrong done to her would have awakened pity in God's mountains as well as in God's angels, but how could I say, "Yes!" at that disturbed and hysterical moment. To-morrow she might change,

the next day she might be gone for ever, or the following day I might repent having given the word "Yes!" without weighing the consequences.

So I soothed her, patted her, playfully put back her hair, and kissed her affectionately.

"To-morrow," I said, "Lena, to-morrow, we will talk this matter over. You are not yourself to-night. Don't think of the fearful apparition of that man who has destroyed your life. Forget it. Get yourself into a calm state of mind; then, undisturbed, we will talk the matter over, and whatever I can do to help you, or to soothe you, or to comfort you, I swear to you it shall be done. There, now, don't drag away."

She extricated herself from my grasp, rose, and having adjusted her hair before the glass, said, "You refuse me?"

"No, Lena, I do not refuse." I answered quietly. "It is all too sudden, too unexpected. Think, old girl, of what you have done. To use racing language, you made the pace such a cracker the first couple of furlongs that you have carried me off my legs."

Lena smiled.

"To-morrow I will see you, Lena." I promised. "Your mind will then be calm, and perhaps changed. You know I like you. You know I could not but be kind to you. I respect your brains, as I admire your body, but please don't forget that you are a—well, you are really a bit too classic for a man of my meagre understanding."

At this she laughed right out, and said, "If being classical, Bluey, is your only objection, I will throw the finery out of the window, adopt another garb, and follow you anywhere you choose to lead, dressed as a bricklayer's wife in a coarse winsey skirt, and

wearing a pair of heavy boots. Was it not the beautiful Queen of Scots that once said she would be content to travel the world in a common petticoat if her lord and master, Bothwell, were by her side? I will travel anywhere so long as my boy, my Bluey, is by my side."

Then she kissed me, and I gave her a fond squeeze and bade her cheer up until to-morrow.

CHAPTER XXV.—COUNTESS A MURDERESS.

AFTER leaving The Countess I walked briskly to my hotel, preferring the open-air and starlit firmament to the close, muggy atmosphere of a hired cab. It was a beautiful night. A gentle wind, playing joyously from the East, soothed and revived me. I was deeply impressed with the story of Lena's tragic life. No one could but pity her. The hand of fate had been laid heavily upon her. As for her husband—well, he was a monster; nothing short of hanging could mend him. At the same time my thoughts went to the business she was on, and I thought I should like to see her through it. She was a real good pal at the game, extremely clever, and very square in all her dealings. But what could I do, I reflected. I was not put on the earth for the express purpose of protecting, for the term of my whole life, a fallen Countess, who, now that she had fallen with a pretty heavy thud, wanted to play the part of a repentant Magdalen, and wanted me to be incorporated in the act of atonement by ending my days in some lonely spot in Australia where the expansion of acres, of trees, or of sheep don't count. I had never done anything to warrant playing the part of St. Jerome or of an ancient party called Diogenes.

Besides, I should look awkward strutting about Australia with a Magdalen-Countess hanging on to my coat tails. Moreover, Magdalens are at a big discount in Australia. Nobody wants them;

everybody goes over the other side of the street when they see them coming. They are liable, at any moment, to kick over the traces and upset the apple cart, after they have upset everything else. I never did go much on this repentance craze, especially if the sinner is of the age and beauty of The Countess. If she is old and ugly and suffering from every form of acute rheumatism, then I can understand her steering for the path of rectitude.

It was late when I entered my hotel—past 2 a.m. The night porter asked me if I was Mr. Duncan St. Clair.

I nodded.

“Beg pardon, Sir,” he said, “amongst the visitors to this hotel I gave your name this night to the Press as one of the guests from London. I hope no offence, Sir.”

I nodded again, and, inwardly saying something hot about the Press and the porter’s stupidity, went straight to bed.

On going down to breakfast the next morning, I again mentally swore at the night porter, as the morning papers had my name as a distinguished visitor in block type, “Mr. Duncan St. Clair, of London.” I did not see The Countess that day, but received frantic notes from her; in fact, one about every hour. I telephoned her that I was ill. So I was—ill at ease. She had all the game planned for the “pinching” of Mrs. Makin’s crown jewels. Old New York Fagin and his expert gang were in the swim. I made up my mind to play safety on the “outer,” as I did not like the New York gang. They were all well noted amongst our fraternity as squeakers when squeezed.

The day passed anyhow. The night I spent at

the opera. Melba was the star and was in good voice, but I think she was in a bad temper. On returning, the hall porter told me that the telephone had rung several times in the evening, with frantic calls for me. I was soon in bed, and spent the night in a restless, disturbed state.

In the morning the waiter came to my room, with the morning papers and coffee. While he was drawing back the blinds to let the fresh air, perfumed with the fragrance from the lovely garden below, into the hot and stuffy room, he carelessly whimpered, in a half lisp, "Dreadful murder in the city last night, Sir."

I stretched and yawned, and casually remarked that murder in New York seemed to be a thriving occupation. "What is the average?" I asked. "Don't they kill about two a night here? Whose throat is cut, this time?"

"No throat cut this time, Boss. Guess it's a bullet done the trick. This is, I guess, no back-lane common murder. It's quite an aristocratic affair; up-to-date in every detail. Ghee! A real live lord made cold meat of by a lovely woman and up-to-date Countess."

"Countess!" I ejaculated, "Countess!" The coffee and cup also took fright, and broken china rolled on the oaken floor.

"What Countess?" I queried.

"It's full set out in the paper," was the waiter's response. "All details gathered; nothing missed up to the sheet agoin' to press. Ghee! It reads mighty like a red hot page from a fire-proof novel."

The waiter took the paper from my hand, wetted his plump thumb along the thick, large bars of his lips, and opened the paper out saying, "There you

get your money's full value to-day. I must go, Sir. Gheel! Two of our hands got passed into the lock-up for a mild case of assault; so we are short-handed and I have got to work double shift."

I read the paper. It was an extra special edition containing, in the "Stop Press" space, a brief account of a sensational murder, news of which had been received as the wonderful printing presses were reeling off the final copies of the ordinary latest morning edition. Consequently, there were few particulars.

In the early hours of that same morning a revolver shot awakened and alarmed the guests and servants of the hotel at which The Countess was staying. The manager discovered that her drawing room was locked on the inside. On the door being forced a man, prostrate on the floor, was found bleeding from two shot wounds in his breast; and a doctor who speedily arrived, declared that life was extinct. When the door was forced the Countess was pacing the room in an agitated manner, which seemed to denote mingled tribulation and exultation. Tearless, and with an air of defiance, she told the manager that the dead man was her husband, and that she had killed him. A later telephone message stated that The Countess had been taken to The Tombs Prison, and that a search of her baggage suggested that she was a notorious adventuress in league with a gang of expert swell mobsmen.

Brief details. But they conveyed volumes to me. I cast the paper from me, in horror. Fate had played its last card with the unfortunate Countess. Poor Lena! Poor, brainy Lena!—a good pal—a clever chum. Yes, at last.

"At last! At last," I kept repeating to myself—

"at last Lena has failed." I was restless and uneasy, but to appear so would be madness. I must look to myself; but I could not, would not desert her. I hurriedly dressed, faced the breakfast table with the paper in my hand, read through the meal to avoid discussion, afterwards lit a cigar, and strolled into the reading room. There, I fossicked out the business directory and picked out an old established firm of lawyers, Gympie and Sons. I inquired, casually, if they were a first-rate firm. Receiving assurances that they were, I was soon in their office and instructed them to watch every detail of Madam's defence.

That brilliant member of the firm, Mr. Roderick Gympie, promised his personal attention to the matter. I enclosed a card in a sealed envelope for Madam's eye only. The card, in my own handwriting, ran thus:—

New York.

*My beloved, I am shocked and
pained beyond expression. Cheer
up! Be brave! Say nothing! Be
sure in your darkest danger, my love,
my life, my all is at your disposal.*

BLUEY GREY TO THE COUNTESS.

The obliging lawyer took the sealed envelope and promised secrecy. The evening papers came out with large, agonising type and a photo-plate

of Mrs. Makin's diamond tiara, the facsimile of which was found, among the belongings of The Countess, with her detailed account of the whole plan of how the robbery was to be worked.

A later edition of the "Yellow Agony" announced to the New Yorkers that a New York "fence" and thief, known as "Fagin," had been arrested in connection with The Countess's planned robbery. Then came more cross head lines:—

THE JEWEL-THIEVING GANG BROKEN UP.

OTHER ARRESTS HOURLY EXPECTED.

These headlines, however, did not name all of those whose arrest was expected, and as the cap did not fit me I, of course, declined to wear it. But I took the precaution to clear my room of every scrap of paper of tell-tale evidence. I saw the young lawyer, Roderick Gympie, that night. He had put in good work. Madam was comfortably lodged and was being decently fed, but when I asked after Madam's health he smiled, looked cunningly at me, and said, "She is a bit sweet on you, my boy. You're a lucky devil to have such a beautiful woman to dream over. See, she gave me back your card, duly sealed, and extracted a solemn promise from me that I would keep it until she demanded it back in person, and if she did not call I was to destroy it."

"Crumbs!" thought I. "What does she want with a worthless piece of cardboard?" However, I soon forgot the incident.

The days grew into weeks, and weeks into months, and at last Madam's trial was fixed. The greatest excitement prevailed. Some of the papers

took the Countess's part, because they sold their special editions by doing so; others likened her to an express agent of the devil who had come to New York to get diamonds, and had got gaol.

The day of the trial arrived. It was a damp, thundery day, with ominous black clouds hanging over the citadel of Justice. Ever and anon flashes of vivid lightning lightened up the dismal rain-drenched streets. Later, an immense shower of hail burst over the city, with such fury, and accompanied by such terrible gushes of easterly wind, that the good folk of the town stood still and stared vacantly at each other, in very fear.

At the Court the doors opened and slammed and creaked on their hinges and admitted great gusts of wind and rain. The hail pelted against the windows and cracked panes. The place was dismally cold and damp. The whole surroundings seemed weird and uncanny. Still, the Majesty of Justice went on unmoved and unruffled, although most of the jurymen shivered in their damp socks and tried, by shifting one leg over the other, to keep themselves warm.

The case rolled on its dreary way for three long days. The suspense was terrible. The indictment against the Countess was appalling. Her life, highly coloured, was unfolded bit by bit, and the evil of it magnified by the blood hounds of the law. Madam's counsel made a strong and eloquent appeal on her behalf, but the judge, the jury, the public, and most of the newspapers condemned her so vehemently that the appeal fell on hearts of stone. She was found guilty of murder in the lesser degree.

Madam stood in the dock, resigned, Her dark

gossamer veil was artistically wound around her hat and head and shoulders, only admitting to the sullen light of the Court her lovely face, lighted up by bright and beautiful eyes. She seemed more beautiful than ever. The very awfulness of her plight made her a grand spectacle for the gaping idlers of the court to feed, nay to feast, their lazy eyes upon.

The Judge put on his spectacles, threw back his cap, and, glaring at her, said, "Madam, having heard the verdict of the jury have you anything to say why sentence should not be passed upon you?"

"Yes," said The Countess, raising her head and gazing stedfastly into the face of the law—not justice—personified on the bench in the form of a crusty and grumpy old Judge. "Yes," she repeated, "The dead man way-laid me as a child, lured me as a girl, and damned me as a woman. He wrecked my body and destroyed my soul. But for him, I might have been respectably fulfilling the destiny of a good and pure woman—wife of some respectable man; mother of healthy, pure-minded children. But for that man, I might have been—well, anything but what I am. He came as a viper in my path; as a viper he destroyed me; and, as a viper, I killed him."

Having paused a moment, The Countess continued, "After being separated from the viper for more than twenty years, he appeared here—when the poison he injected in the veins of my young life was being eradicated—to demand that I should go back and live with him as his wife. To go back to him would have meant a life of thieving—and worse. He used to me an epithet no woman could endure, and threatened to proclaim from the house

tops that instant that the Countess de Valleric wore the lily of the French prison on her left shoulder. In my frenzy, I drew a revolver I kept on a side case for protection, and fired—without direction and without aim. He fell, as I thought, wounded. Even then I prayed that the shots were not fatal. But they were fatal. The fault was his—not mine.”

As she uttered the last words her head fell, as though with a heavy weight, on to her heaving bosom.

Every eye in the court was steadfastly resting on that bowed form. Few eyes were not moist. The Judge was one of the exceptions. He was old, soured, and grumpy. No youthful hot blood in his veins. With curled lip and uplifted brow, he gazed hard at the beautiful, shivering form before him, and said, “Clever, callous, and crime-bespotted women of your class and of your character, no matter how beautiful or how eloquent, cannot appeal to the softest springs of one’s heart. They must, and shall, in the public interest, be dealt with in such a form that society shall be protected against their wiles and their machinations. According to the evidence and the testimony of the police you are, Madam, one of the worst thieves that has been before our Court during the last twenty years. You are sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment. There is ample time to reform. Go !”

The Countess raised her great eyes to the corner of the gallery where I had sat, day after day, disguised. It was a look of appeal to me. An appeal for what? What could I do for her? Yet it was an appeal. An appeal from the inner recesses

of Lena's heart to mine. She half smiled as the trap opened, and she descended the stone steps leading to the corridor of "The Tombs," and to her weary pilgrimage of penance.

I left the Court and its surroundings, with a heavy heart and a heavy step. I made my way to the lawyers to pay her bill and to arrange for obtaining and storing her effects. I said little to the lawyer, and he was not in a talkative mood. Having made notes of my wishes, and received the dollars to discharge his account, he handed me an envelope with a little note from Madam. It ran:—

In my hour of misery you proffered me your love. This gave joy and resignation to my poor heart. Be sure I will come claim that love from you in person, if I live. If I die I will die blessing your name.—Your loving and future wife, LENA.

Poor Lena! I really think if she had been free at that moment I could have loved her and married her. As it was, we were now dead to each other—for ever. Still, she was foremost in my mind, and first in my thoughts. Sleeping or waking, she was therein; it seemed to be her resting place, her refuge and her harbour of safety. Poor Lena.

CHAPTER XXVI.—BACK TO THE RACES.

WITH a heated and disturbed mind, I drove from the lawyer's office to my hotel. The hall porter was affability itself.

"Beg pardon, Squire," he said, "a short, stout gentleman has been a-coolin' of his heels, awaitin' or you in No. 2 refreshment room."

I entered the refreshment room, and, who should make a rush, with open arms to greet me, but old Dad. I was real glad, for I wanted a tonic for my overstrung nerves. When we were seated in my sitting-room, and had stopped staring at each other. Dad said, in a half whisper, "Well, my boy, what did I tell you? Ain't she a whopper of a devil? What did I say about that woman?"

"Stop! Stop!" I cried. "She is fastened up now, Dad, tied up in the firm bonds of what they call law and justice. Don't trample on her. I have learned to like her—not love her, or lose my 'block' over her—but I have learned to like her, and, after all, her husband was a dog that should never have been born, and, being born, should have been drowned, as they drown blind puppies. But let us drop the subject. Poor Lena!"

"Poor Lena!" he gasped, "Why my lad ——"

"No, no, Dad," I said, "we must drop her, once and for all. Tell me something about yourself."

"Well," said Dad, after a lengthy pause, "I have had rather a rough time of it, of late. Nothing seems to go right or come my way. However, I

have joined a few smarties for the coming races here. You are a 'head' at the game, and are well in it. I know I can trust you my boy; so, after I have told you the strength of our game, you can come in with us or you can stay out. It will make no difference to our friendship.

"Now, to take a short cut to the business. There are six horses accepted for the Stars and Stripes Handicap. They are FLY THE GARTER, top weight 10-3, PINK 'UN, 9-6 (favourite); CHATTERBOX, 8-12 (a fair horse); CULGOA, 8-6 (a high-bred one, but fretful at the post); ROOSEVELDT, 8-2 (a fair horse), and THE KING'S MAJESTY, an outsider, with 6-10 on his back. Pink 'Un's owner is a millionaire, and his trainer above suspicion, the stable as impregnable as a fortress. He must simply go out in the hands of Providence, for he cannot be got at or touched. A crack jockey is coming over from England to ride Pink 'Un. Still, he may get a bump, be left at the post, or fall down. Fly the Garter has too much weight. Culgoa is owned by one of our mob, and, of course, will be stopped. Roosevelt is the best horse, bar the favourite, in the race, but he will be stopped by Scotty Talker.

"Scotty Talker!" I repeated.

"Yes," said Dad, "he is in the joke. He will stop him if he has to pull him up in the straight to do it. Chatterbox is not class enough, and, in fact, is at the moment for sale, cheap. The King's Majesty is the bottom weight, a good horse. Our mob brought him here as a dark 'un. He will start at a long price. He is a beautifully bred colt, and can go like a machine. He will be a rank outsider in the race. Perhaps will start at

100 to 1, and as we are sure to be able to put all in the race asleep but Pink 'Un—who is an even money favourite—it will be Pink 'Un and the King's Majesty for it. I think, at the weights, King's Majesty is sure to win. Besides, as I said before, the favourite goes out trusting to bumps, accidents, and, of course, to Providence. There is money in the deal. If you care to come in and help us, you can. You see, if you are good on the square, there will be only two triers in the race, and providence may interfere with the favourite. It is about the only way he can be interfered with."

"Providence," I explained to Dad, "has rather too much on hand to be troubled with put-up jobs. Trusting to Providence, is like trusting to luck, and luck is only another name for laziness. Your scheme is rotten, Dad, in every grain. On the slightest pressure it comes to pieces, and you are left. Surely, it is racecourse flats that have worked up this wretched rigmarole of yours. I would not back it with bad money or second-hand 'bricks.'"

"Well," said Dad, rather grumpily, "Can you Bluey, advise something better, for once the job is fixed up, it is like picking up money in the street, and all the police dead."

I said, "I will see what I can do, but whatever I do, only you and I must be in it. You must twist on those new chum pals of yours—yes, you must twist on them——"

He repeated the lines in a whisper, and I replied, "It's a matter of getting money—not sentiment."

"The mater and the kids must be fed and clothed," Dad observed, after a pause. "You have the brainbox to put the job through. You sit behind the spoofer. You are a journeyman at the game."

"Why, then, should I trust my liability in the hands of apprentices?" I asked.

Extending his hand, he said, "Shake! I am with you, Bluey."

We shook.

"Remember, Dad," I said, "I am in full charge of this surprise packet. You obey orders, and we may pull it off. If we don't we shall lose neither money nor reputation."

"Nor liberty," he grinned.

"Nor liberty," I agreed, and added, "Now, go! Keep in with your mob in private; don't be seen with them in public; never mention my name to them; and see me every night here at nine o'clock. Have a drink? Open that small bottle of wine on the side table. It's the best. Thanks, not too much for me. I have taken little since that trouble with The Countess disturbed me. Besides, an abominable cough seems to have taken up its residence in my chest. It keeps me awake at night."

"I have noticed you coughing pretty constantly, my lad," said Dad. "A stitch in time, you know, as the old women say."

I laughed, but was impatient for him to be gone.

When I was alone, I commenced to work out the race problem. You never know your luck in a big city. The owner of the favourite was ambitious and full of money; the trainer was above suspicion; and the jockey was an English crack who valued reputation above dollars. The horse was housed in a citadel, and the public, to a man, were on him *to their last dollar*. It was a tough point, to get at this horse. "Could it be worked?" I mused, "Could it be worked?"

In this reverie or day-dream I mused on the fall

and misery of The Countess. How, now, was that haughty spirit living and burning under the prison weight? Was her proud heart at war with her surroundings? Was she, in her frenzy, invoking the aid of the devil for her delivery, or was she quietly and passively resigned?

I had been far from well, but the thought of sickness vanished in a twinkling when Dad bustled into the room—all hurry, all flurry, and all perspiration, with the news that the jockey, Talker, had arrived, that he was then on his way to the hotel to chat with me, and that Dad's mob of swell magsmen were booming and bragging about the prospects of pulling off their little joke.

At this point I heard a bustle and an argument on the stairs, with a screech which resembled that of a cross-cut saw tearing through a hollow log, saying, "I know! I know! I will find my way, don't you bother!"

It was Talker who came bustling into the room, and bawled, "What oh! Bluey? By the Lord, you *are* doing it brown, old cove. What price? I thought you'd done a skip to England. What's the game? How glum you do look! Why, a bloke would take you for a parson—you've got such a serious squint on your dial!"

"For pity's sake! shut off that hot air," I said, angrily approaching him. "One day your language will be giving you your deserts *in gaol*. Why can't you behave yourself, sometimes at least?"

"Rats!" he exclaimed. "Here's a go! Bluey turned preacher! You only want the cap and coat on, and a stick to beat the drum with, and you'd be just the thing!"

"Well," I said, "you've come down from the

Lake Country to ride the horse, King's Majesty, dead. Don't glare at me like that! Isn't it true that you are being paid to pull the horse? Yes, or no?"

He said, "Well, fair dinkum, that's right, but who gave you the strength of it, Bluey?"

"That does not matter," I replied, "I know of it—that's enough—and if it has not got to the owner's ears yet, it will. Then you'll be watched, and if you are once questioned here by the stewards, out you go, for life. You're a carnation fool to be lending yourself to a mob of dead mugs who have not yet learned the first lesson in our business—silence."

"Well," he said, "I'll blow 'em up, if you like, then twist on 'em and let 'em get some one else to ride the nag."

"Nothing of the sort," I remarked. "Do what I tell you, and you will ride on the box seat all the time. Remember, you mount the horse to win. Tell the mugs anything *bar that you are going to win*. Now you be solid, my young knight of the bit and curb, especially the curb."

"Chuck the growl, Bluey," he said, good temperedly, "and let's get to work. I'm with you until death or a policeman parts us—sure Bluey, you're a hot 'un—a king amongst us."

"Yes," I added, "King of Knaves!" And then asked, "Do you know who is going to ride Fly the Garter?"

"Irby Beano," he answered.

"Is he a square head?"

"Not much. He's just the thing. Open to reason. I think he's got the dope to ride crook, but I can get him to twist if you want to run that way."

"No," I assured him. "Keep good with him, and, when I tell you, bring him here. Now go, and be sure to see me here every night, Hooray!"

"Hooray! Bluey," he replied—and was gone.

When alone once more I pondered over the state of the poll. The Swell and Old Dad were playing safety on the "outer," and had four mugs on the hook. One of the mugs owned a horse entered for the big money. The animal was a pretty fair neddy, and it was my business to buy, borrow, or steal him. Dad and The Swell were going to bring this mug to my hotel for the purpose of taking me down at cards. The truth was, The Swell had been sent over by Father Abraham to help The Countess cart the jewels to London, but as the police had carted The Countess to The Tombs The Swell had joined Dad and me to get his expenses by turning an honest penny in the joke I was about to put up to stiffen the favourite.

He agreed to help me, and to bring his friends and the mug to my room that night, the plan being that they were coming for the definite purpose of robbing me of my money and the horse I had not yet bought. My game was to turn the tables—to spring on them in an unwary moment.

I rang the bell for my waiter—a good sort of fellow—who had made about a dozen attempts to be friendly with me. I think he took a "tumble" that I was a "head."

"Perkins," I said, "I am going to have a little card party here to-night with some of my friends. I want you to wait on us, and see that no outsiders are allowed in."

"Yes, sir," he replied. "For that purpose I was especially made."

"Yes," I said, "but you don't know me. You are simply taking me on trust."

He smiled.

"You have got to trust me," I said, "as to whether I do the handsome or the mean trick by you when I leave here."

"Oh! no," he said, "I know your history."

"You know my history?" I exclaimed, nearly staggered.

"Yes," he replied, quietly. "We know every move you have taken, Sir."

"Do you?" I said. "This is pretty smart work."

"Yes," he added. "Your character was sent on to us the day your luggage arrived."

I was commencing to feel a bit worried. "Here's a go," I thought. "This dope is on the blackmail stakes. He has been through my baggage, has seen something, and guesses the rest. Now, just when I want to be friendly with him, he opens out and tells me that he knows my history."

"Sent on with my luggage," I said aloud. "Pray who sent my history on?"

"One of our Union Brigade," was the reply.

"Oh, you belong to a Union, do you?"

"We waiters could not exist five minutes on end without a Union," he retorted.

"Well," I said, "where was I ever introduced to any member of your Union?"

"It's just like this, Sir," he answered, "We have a Union of Waiters and Hotel Porters. If you stay, say, in Paris, and you tell the porter there to prepare your goods and chattels for removal, and you depart in the sulks, and forget that there is such a thing as a waiter or hotel porter in existence, then notice of the fact and the absence of liberality in your com-

position is duly posted on to whatever hotel you are going to camp at. If you are liberal and just—and, by our reckoning, the more liberal you are the more just you are—then, that fact is also posted on to us. These facts come to us with your luggage—that is, *on* the luggage. If you are a good pay, the label is put on in such a fashion that we will note the fact. If you are a fair pay, that intimation likewise comes on. If you don't pay at all, your name and address is posted on your luggage, and on the address card there is a small black ball put on each corner—so, you are black-balled. If you pay like a prince, or, as you English call it, 'like a toff,' then, a little red heart goes on to your luggage bag to denote that you are all heart—and you are treated accordingly. These advices are necessary to secure for us the fruits of the first law of nature—self-preservation."

"In some of these large hotels," the waiter added, "we have to pay the manager for allowing us to do the work; so, in turn, somebody has got to pay us, and it generally falls on the guests. As a matter of self-defence, we have to rob the first we can conveniently get our hands on. I, Sir, have had to rob to keep going, although I never started going with the intention of robbing. It's the system that's bad—not those who are forced to adopt the system."

"Oh!" I said, feeling relieved. "So that is how they find out from one hotel to another—the good marks from the bad, is it? And do the members of your league find out the different occupations of its clients? Do they say what trade, for instance, a man follows?"

"No, not exactly. But signs are often passed to let us know if such a guest is solid—that is to say,

pretty firm, and not too particular about shuffling his finger into other people's pies, so long as other people leave his pie alone. The intelligence we received about you, Sir, was that you were pretty 'fly,' and that you could be trusted. So, as America is the home of 'fly' men, we were glad to welcome you."

All this was very interesting to me, and as I sat minutely gazing on this big, raw-boned waiter, I thought, "If it were necessary to pay a respectable waiter to break a man's neck over the balcony, this is the respectable waiter that would do the job for a respectable sum."

I threw the waiter a five-dollar bill, told him what I wanted, to see me again about twenty minutes before the party arrived, and to be sure to be well dressed in the hotel uniform.

During the day I got a note from Mr. Roderick Gypie, saying that he had bought the horse, Culgoa, for 4,200 dollars.

That night Dad, prompt to his appointment, landed at my room with The Swell and with Mr. Jenkins (the owner of Fly the Garter) and another man.

CHAPTER XXVII.—HIGH PLAY.

AFTER the usual introductions and salutations, and the inevitable "nip" of Old Scotch (made in Ireland), The Swell and his two friends and I proceeded to the play table in my sitting room. My hotel waiter was in strict duty uniform and waiting statue-like to receive orders. We soon got to business.

"Do you play high, Mr. Jenkins?" I inquired.

"Not particularly high, but high enough to suit some people's purses," he said, dryly and tartly. He seemed a sour-souled individual.

"Waiter, bring some cards!" I bawled. "Yes, half-a-dozen packs. Stop! You had better get different brands of cards, but let them all be good."

The cards—sealed up, as I had left them with my friend the waiter—were soon produced. I took the head of the table, Dad the foot, and Jenkins and The Swell sat on the right side of the convivial board. The stranger, whose name I forgot, seemed to enjoy nothing better than puffing away at his rank and green cigar, while the tobacco juice occasionally played havoc with his iron-grey goatly beard. He eyed me curiously on several occasions, and I often caught him quietly taking stock of my features and general make-up. Who he was, or why he came there, no one seemed to know. However, he came with the rest and was introduced, produced his bundle of dollar bills, and took his place automatically on the left side of the play table.

Old Dad dealt first hand. I threw out, smoked my cigarette, and listlessly watched the play, which was small. Jinkins won and smiled a self-satisfied smile, which seemed to say "These folks are mine." He dealt next, and I held three tens and two queens. I saw the blind. The stranger rose the blind on me without, of course, looking at his hand. Dad threw into the pack, and The Swell followed Dad's sound caution. Thus, the stranger, Jinkins, and I were left alone. Jinkins came to see. The stranger's cross chip on the blind rose it 200 dollars. I came in, and increased the rise by another 200 dollars. The stranger—with the green cigar and the cold eye that was nearly always fixed on me, when it was not on his cards—fell out. This left Jinkins and I at it. Jinkins made good my rise, and increased the rise by another 200 dollars. I immediately forfeited, and threw into the pack. Of course, Jinkins scooped the pool. In doing so he smiled and smirked in triumph, and murmured, "What ho! Cocktails, eh?"

This win was the first mild sensation of the play. I motioned to my faithful waiter to fill the gentlemen's glasses, which he did. Jinkins generously drank my wine, and wished me good health saying he required all the good luck going that evening.

I threw out again; so did Jinkins and The Swell. Dad and the stranger had a small go by rising the blind on each other in 50 dollar bids. The pool represented about 300 dollars. The Swell—who never could play cards—called Jinkins; Dad also came in to have a look, and won again with three queens and two eights, just nipping Jinkins with three jacks and two tens. The Swell's hand was worthless. Jinkins took this licking very badly.



He growled, spluttered, and explained, and then growled again and took more wine. I dealt next and threw out; so did Dad and Jenkins; leaving The Swell and the stranger at it. The stranger won, but the pool was small. The Swell rose and threw the cards into the fire place, swearing that he would never touch a card again. We all laughed, and the waiter filled up the glasses with the Old Scotch and wine, and brought us cards anew. The new pack having been served out, Dad dealt. I got three tens and two sevens. I chipped in; so did Jenkins and the stranger. Dad threw into the pack. I called Jenkins, and lost. Jenkins laughed heartily at winning, and kept repeating, "Good business, this. Yes, good business!"

The next deal rested with Jenkins, who drank more wine, tugged with cyclone-ferocity at his cigar, and, as he dealt the hands, talked like a threshing machine doing duty on a prosperous farm. This deal was a pass out, and the pool became a double header. The talk was incessant, the smoke thick, and the wine thicker. I had by now fairly convinced Jenkins, his pal, and the stranger that I was no better player than the ordinary mug that one drops across when travelling.

In the excitement and the babel of tongues—during which The Swell who stood near Jenkins and kept that worthy, self-conceited gentleman fully engaged answering important questions as to why he did not do this, or why something else did not take place—during all this I rang the changes in the packs, as the waiter who took my sign (we had already agreed on this) cleared off the debris of cigar ashes, glasses, etc. He bustled off the old pack, placed beside me the new pack that I had

especially prepared, and, with these now in my hands, I dealt carefully and surely, as I intended to give Jinkins a knock-out blow. The cards being dealt, I had four tens; and the stranger, who had been all the time sitting suspiciously eyeing me on my left, went on the blind. Dad took the "office" from me, and, being directly at the foot of the table, straddled the blind. It was now up to Jinkins to look at his cards, come to see the blind, raise it, or go out. He saw the blind and raised it 500 dollars. This caused a little sensation. It was exactly what I was angling for. It was now my turn to speak. It would cost me 700 dollars to come in and have a look. Of course, I could raise it to any amount if I wanted. I grabbed my cards, considered them, with a serious stage-struck look, surveyed the players suspiciously, looked at my cards again, looked for a moment or two out of the open window as if considering, and then looked again at the players. Every eye was firmly set on me. "Was I bluffing?" "Was I a cocktail?" "Had I a good hand?" was evidently some of their thoughts. Jinkins apparently thought I was bluffing; he seemed nervous. The stranger sat like a stone statue, and Dad commenced to hum a tune about the good old times. At last Jinkins picked up his cards to have another look, put them down again, and looked at me. This settled it. I got the "office" from the waiter, who stood behind Jinkins, as to the value of each card that Jinkins held. Dad's "office" to me was to go on. The Swell tried to inform me that the stranger's hand was only medium. I thought I knew the hands that I dealt out, but I was fearful of a mistake. I plunged. I saw the 700 dollars in the pool, and

raised the stake 1,000 dollars. The stranger quietly went into the pack. Dad also sought safety in the pack. This left Jinkins and I at it. He bit his lips, glared at his cards, and then, in the voice of a true bluffer, said, "I will see that 1,000 dollars and raise it another 1,000 dollars."

All necks were now strained to see what move I would take, and the effect it would have on Jinkins.

"I'll see your extra 1,000 dollars, and call you to show your hand," I cried. "Stop! See that the money is correct in the pool." This The Swell undertook to do, with the easiness of a retired banker.

When all was ready, Jinkins threw his hand down, fully expecting to win. He held three aces and two kings.

"A good hand, but no good to me," I coolly remarked, throwing down my four tens. I raked the pool, with the assistance of The Swell. For a moment, no one spoke. I pocketed the "brass," and rose to open the window wider and take a spoonful of three-star brandy from the sideboard.

Jinkins soon found his tongue. "Not going to quit play, old chappie?" he said. "Your fortune is not made yet, anyhow. Surely, you will give a good player like me his revenge, won't you, eh? Quitting with a few dollars ain't good business anyhow, eh?"

"Oh," I said, "I have no intention of going. I only want a stretch and a 'nip.'"

More liquor and cigars were served with a pretty heavy hand by the waiter, and biscuits and sandwiches were removed from the side table to the card table. It was a sort of impromptu adjournment. All chaffed, talked, and explained—ex-

planations had by far the easiest go in the talking contest. The room was practically full of smoke and heat, and the players were getting drunk. I stepped on to the verandah—where my faithful waiter brought me another spoonful of brandy and a sandwich—to throw dust in the eyes of the talkers.

“Excuse me, Squire,” he said, “your birds are getting top heavy. If you delay plucking them much longer they will be too drunk to sing, too drunk to continue their explanations, and certainly too drunk to play cards.”

“You’ve hit the hammer on the right anvil,” I quickly replied, “I’ll do it, at once. It will be my deal in opening; therefore, hand me the yellow pack with gold backs and gilt edges, and we will commence operations on their banks immediately.”

The card table was cleared, and each man took his seat. I dealt, but on carefully looking at my opponent, Jinkins, I did not consider him yet drunk enough to knock on the head. So I dealt anyhow, and gave him a fairly decent hand, threw out myself, gave Dad the “office” to do likewise, and Jinkins won a couple of 100 dollars from his friend the stranger, who found his tongue by cursing all before or behind him.

Drinks were supplied after each hand, and each time Jinkins took in more drink than during the preceding round. When the cards got round to me again, I thought he was just drunk enough to hit, and hit hard. I wanted to give him one knock-out blow. I playfully threw the cards face up on the table, gathered the “readied” cards up with the lightning speed of a “tradesman” (card-sharper), shuffled while the others talked, and drank and smoked, and then I dealt the hands I was waiting

for. The stranger went a 100 dollars on the blind; Dad getting the "office" as before, crossed the blind with 200 dollars; and Jinkins crossed Dad's blind with 300 dollars. Therefore, it cost me 600 dollars to have a look. I looked at my cards. I had dealt out to myself a pretty hand, but I wanted the ten of hearts to make it a real "bosker." How could I get the ten? Without it, I might as well throw in my hand, and go to bed. The waiter—who was really too clever to be waiting for anything, unless it was to be hanged for being clever—spotted the hands in an instant. He saw that the ten was missing from my hand, and, to keep the situation going, attempted to bring me something in the way of refreshment. In the "attempt," he fell over my feet—tray and all. I rose to shake the spilt grog from my clothes, and when I sat down I actually sat on the missing ten which the waiter had dropped on the edge of my chair. With this ten in hand I had a Dreadnought in the firing line amongst a host of frigates. I looked at my cards and said, "Gentlemen, I believe you're all bluffing. You have seen your cards before you went on the blind, and my opinion is that they are not worth the dollars you have cast into the pool. It will cost me 600 dollars. I will see the 600 dollars and raise it 2,000 dollars. That's a bit of cold pudding for you to digest, eh! Mr. Jinkins? No cocktail about that. What say you, friend, Jinkins?" said I, laughing and chipping at him.

The stranger threw into the pack. Dad gave a long, low whistle, and ejaculated, "Who's bluffing, now?" Jinkins looked at his cards. I had served him a routine flush. It was generous of me. but he wanted something to bring him on. I kept

chipping at him, for I knew it was only a matter of his coming on and taking my bait. This rise of 2,000 dollars almost took his breath away. The colour left his cheeks, his eyes were bloodshot, his lips quivered, his teeth were clenched, and he hissed out curses under his breath, so to speak.

"Bluff, pure bluff. Nothing short of bluff."

He scrutinised every spot on his cards, and then in a hoarse, thick, croaky voice—the voice of a man half drunk, half mad, and wholly excited and avaricious—said, "I will see your infernal bluff rise of 2,000 dollars, and rise it another 1,000 dollars."

This declaration caused a good deal of excitement in the room. Each individual strained his neck to get a better view of the two opponents, Jinkins and myself. Dad, with one eye always to business, said, "Look to the pool; count the money, and see that the cash is right." This The Swell did in his usual polite and gentlemanly manner. All being correct it was "full steam ahead."

I stopped, considered, and gave the sign to the waiter to fill up the glasses, which he did silently. I then said, "I will see your 1,000 dollar rise and raise it 5,000 dollars, which you will have to pay to see my hand, or go to the pack." I hissed across the table, "You called me a cocktail in the early part of this game. Take care, Mr. Jinkins, *you* don't prove to be a cocktail! Plank in your 5,000 dollars," I said, tauntingly, "and stop what we Australians call 'cheap mag.' If you're not a cocktail, plank in your brass! It is a matter of stuff up, or shut up!"

Thus I kept tantalising him. He was drunk,

or nearly so, but was cunning enough to know that his hand was good—very good, far above the average. This knowledge, together with my sneers and taunts—which were all parts of the performance—prompted him to fight. His impulse was stimulated by envy, pride, and avarice—all fighting within him. He was assured of his success, and all eyes were now strained on him. For a minute or so no one spoke, but me. I laughed at him, sneered, and chipped at him all the time. Dad, taking the cue from me that I was all right with my hand, said, "Have a slap at him Jenkins, old boy; he is only kidding you." "Be a man or a mouse," hiccoughed the stranger. The Swell looked over Jenkins' shoulder, and whispered to the drunken man, "Why, you flat, your cards are worth a million. He is only bluffing."

Still Jenkins stared. Still he bit his lip, and his blood-shot eyes seemed to get bigger and bigger. The heat of the room was stifling; the smell of the drink and smoke was nauseating.

At last Jenkins found his tongue. "I've made my voice good up to the time I spoke," he said, "by putting my brass into the pool. I am now stumped. I have not another cent on me. If you will take my I.O.U. until the morning I will play on—right straight on and no stopping, and see this snarling cub from that niggers' country through with the business, and when I am done with him you can take it from me that you will be able to wring him out as easily as you could wring out a wet dish cloth."

"No! No! No I.O.U.'s" chipped in The Swell. "I am the master of the pool. Cash up, or shut up!"

Poor Jenkins was crest-fallen. He was just on

the point of throwing his hand into the pool when I came to his assistance.

"Don't throw in, if you think you can beat me," I said. "I believe you are a cocktail, and that you want to dodge further play for fear of losing. If such is not the case, I will give you a chance. You own a horse, a race-horse called Fly the Garter. He has an outside chance of winning on Saturday. I own one too, as good as yours, if not better, Culgoa. I will stake my horse against yours in the play. We will value each animal at 10,000 dollars, and let the hands we hold decide it. If you are a sport, there is your chance. If not, you know your road down stairs and where to find the hall door that leads into the street."

Jinkins snapped, "Done! I'm with you—Curse you all the same. I have got you now, dead sure. You are simply on my knee, in my lap, and I will belt you as my good old mother used to belt me with dad's waist belt."

Receipts and delivery notes for the horses were drawn out in The Swell's correct style, and placed in the pool basin. The pool was again counted, and every man was ready in case of a rush or any cowardly act on the part of Jinkins or his pal. Jinkins sat silent the while, very pale and nearly drunk.

"All right!" exclaimed The Swell, "The money is there, the receipts are right, and the delivery orders O.K. So, gentlemen, show your hands."

We simultaneously threw our hands on to the table. Jinkins had a routine flush; I had a royal flush. I scooped the pool, as by instinct—gold, dollars, bills, two receipts for the horses, two

delivery notes. I pocketed the lot in true savage style.

Jinkins sat like one petrified. He looked aghast. His face was pallid; his lips white, dry, and parted. He looked a man indeed undone. He beckoned to the waiter to give him a glass of wine. The waiter was not long in obeying. I strolled to the verandah. The waiter followed me, and I whispered, "Have you drugged his last glass?"

"Yes, Squire, it is down his neck now. He will be asleep inside half an hour. It's just as well. I don't like the look of him. He's dangerous."

I instinctively feared Jinkins. He was more a maniac at the present moment than anything else.

The cool breeze rustled and played through the moonlit trees, and came in gentle gushes along the verandah and cooled my heated and whirling head. I had won—won his money, and, what was more, won his horse. But I was not yet clear of the rocks, nor would I be until the defeated man was well out of my apartments and in a drugged sleep in his own bed. The drug the waiter had given him would keep him in a state of stupor for forty-eight hours. This would be sufficient time for me.

The race would be run and over, and I would be gone, in case Jinkins squealed. At last Jinkins rose from the table, threw his champagne glass on the floor with a crash, bit his lips until the blood oozed freely, and cursed cards and the fools that played them. He cried like a whipped child, exclaiming, "My money gone! My horse gone! No! Not gone. I will cut his throat first! He shall never put a hand on my beautiful Fly the Garter. Where is that card-sharper?" he screeched. "Surely he has not scooted down some back alley.

Let me go and face him like a man. He has got my money, but he shall never have my horse," he bawled at the top of his husky voice.

Dad, The Swell, and the waiter soothed him considerably, Dad confidentially telling him that I would give him back his horse to-morrow, and perhaps his money. "Come round in the morning."

This seemed to be a gleam of hope to the drunken and drugged man, who came to rob me and received a sound robbing for his pains. He would go home. "Another glass of wine! Fill it up, waiter! Another cigar, and we will make a start for home and bed."

By this time the room had become unbearable with heat, and smoke, and noise. The stranger had donned his light walking overcoat, held his hat in his hand, and was preparing to depart. Jinkins got his coat on, after much assistance. The drug was commencing to work. Dad and the stranger sallied forth to see Jinkins to his hotel. The Swell awaited my instructions. The trio had hardly reached the bottom of the stairs leading to the hall when Jinkins fell, with a thud. He was promptly placed in a four-wheeler, and packed helter-skelter off with Dad to his hotel, put to bed and, labelled "Drunk, very drunk." It was the drug that was doing its work—not altogether the drink. Dad attended to the fallen one, looked after his belongings, his watch, his ring, his scarf pin, and small cash. Dad was a "beaut."

The same afternoon we visited the racing stables of Mr. Timon Pickard. It was a huge pile of buildings, surrounded by a formidable wall, that housed the valuable thoroughbred bloodstock of this worthy millionaire.

Old Mr. Gypie and Dad cronied along together. They joked, and they chaffed, and they laughed, whilst young Roderick Gypie and I walked on in a more serious mood. The head trainer, or superintendent of the establishment, showed us over the palatial building. The head trainer was a grave, serious man. He was an Englishman, with a strong touch of the generous Celtic blood in his veins. Suspicion and he were miles asunder, but strict routine and strict rule were instinctive in him. No man saw, or even touched a horse in the establishment unless someone else was present. Each horse had its special attendant who could be trusted beyond question. The favourite Pink 'Un was entrusted to the oldest hand in the stable, an honest and healthy looking man of about sixty years of age. He was called Youthful Dave. When we came to the box that housed Pink 'Un, Dave took the clothing off the horse and stood back, admiring the animal, with true pride.

"Whatever licks 'im, master, will win," he said. "A fair go, a straight run, and no bumping, and it's all the world to a gooseberry tart he will canter in."

"Doesn't he like bumping, then?" I inquired.

"Well, no, Sir. He is a very bad-tempered horse, and once you get his monkey up—well, that is the end of it. You see, Sir, he is mighty inbred and a big bit on the cranky side. Now, you see that black cat there under his manger. Well, he won't eat or sleep without that cat's with him. So we keep Tom, as we calls it, always with 'im. He is a good doer and eats well and works well, but once get his temper up there is no standing him. He lost two races by being bumped purposely.

by them as wanted 'im to lose, but, thank goodness, it's a small field here, and none of 'em know this horse's weakness," laughed old Dave.

"Well, then, "I said, "I heartily congratulate you on his appearance. He looks the rose of condition. I will back him, and if he wins I will present you with a 500-dollar bill, if it is permissible."

The head trainer nodded his assent, and Dave said, "Thank you kindly, Sir. He will win, sure. It's only a cake walk for him. Isn't he a beauty?" he added, caressing the horse affectionately. "I will buy a farm with that 500 dollars, and, patting the horse said, "there will be a place, old boy, for you to come and end your days with old Dave."

When we got into the square, or courtyard, of the premises I called to the head trainer, and laid him 2,000 dollars to nothing. He hesitated. I pleaded that I was only a visitor here, that I would back this horse to win me 200,000 dollars, and that surely he would scarcely deny me the pleasure of presenting him with a paltry 2,000 dollars.

After considerable hesitation, he said, "Very well, on one condition, Mr. St. Clair, only will I accept your 2,000 dollar bill, and that is that no one knows anything about it. I would lose my billet and reputation if the governor discovered it."

I assured him of secrecy.

A cup of tea was provided in front of the trainer's house, after which, with regrets and good wishes and strong hopes for a win on Saturday, we separated.

When we were alone old Dad opened wide his mouth, and his features expanded as he said, "Bluey, you are mad, stark, staring mad. What the devil did you lay this swell stable 2,000 dollars to nothing for? You have not backed the horse yet

for a dollar, and if he wins you must pay up or take the first boat or first train out of here. What is your game? Suppose, now, this horse wins!"

"He won't win," I replied. "He is mine, the trainer is mine, and old Dave is mine, body and soul. They have touched of the unauthorised spring, and they must drink from it until I have my own way, or see them destroyed. Have a 'nip' and sit down there quietly until I give you instructions to give to the blacksmith who is to shoe this horse. You say you know the blacksmith well, and that he will act straight and faithfully, and do what he is told. He shoes the horse, Rooseveltdt. You say that Rooseveltdt carries thick aluminium plates, and that this blacksmith prepares them. Now, you take this sample of aluminium plate. You see it is all thick and hollow, and screws off at the right end of each shoe to allow it to be loaded with quicksilver. You get him to make a set of those, and to get them made to fit the hoof of the horse Rooseveltdt. You bring them to me, I will have them loaded with quicksilver, and his business is to ring the changes when he is putting the aluminium shoes on Rooseveltdt on the course. That is, put the loaded shoes on, and pocket the light plates. If he does this, and does it well, you can promise him 300 dollars. I don't want to see him at all. It is a matter for you to do, but I expect you to do it properly. You say you have seen Mick Blasheen, who is to ride Chatterbox, and that he is crook."

"Yes," said Dad. "He would cut a man's throat for money. He would stop a train if you paid him, and if he gets caught he can get out of it. He has got out of gaol about ten times, and I would not be surprised on the last day if he was not first

out of his coffin and entering into a magging contest with the angel Gabriel, whom he would have front enough to accuse of blowing his trumpet late. It is a matter of money with him. He will do nothing under 500 dollars, and he wants some down."

"Well," I said, "give him 200 dollars down."

"Not enough," said Dad. "You must spring another 100 dollars. He is a 'head' this bloke. You cannot beat him for a red cent, and if you try he will beat you in the finish."

I said, "Does he drink?"

"Not much! He is too clever to drink."

"Well, give him 400 dollars," I said, "and promise him 600 dollars more when the game is finished."

"Now you are talking sense, Bluey," remarked Dad. "What has he to do?"

"He has simply to weigh out," I replied. "He is carrying 10-3. He has got to weigh out 10-3 with this belt on. You see, it's made of pigskin. It is a double belt, and made in channel form. It weighs about a pound. He will weigh out with this on him, and, after he is weighed, we will ring the changes in belts, and give him a *facsimile* belt loaded with two stone of quicksilver, so that Fly the Garter will be carrying 12-3 instead of 10-3—and that ought to prevent him from flying at anything, much less a garter."

Dad opened his mouth and his eyes and said, "But how about weighing in, Bluey? He will be over-weight."

Nothing of the sort," I replied. "When he passes the post a loser he sweeps round to the far corner of the course, as far as he can respectably get. He then unbuckles the belt, drops it at a con-

venient spot, where I'll have a man stationed ready to grab it. This is what we call 'planting the pigeon.' Then he weighs in without the belt. He will, of course, be a pound short, which is nothing when you lose. Don't you see the game?"

Dad's eyes were riveted on the floor. He gulped his whiskey and water, and said, "Hanged if I ain't getting confused. You have got a lot of irons in the fire, Bluey. Oh, Bluey, where will it end?"

"It's a very big fire," I observed, "and if one wins we shall have money enough to light many a fire for many a day to come. So, cheer up, Dad."

"How about the favourite?" Dad asked.

"There are only two horses now to be dealt with—the favourite and King's Majesty. King's Majesty must win, and the favourite must be settled.

Dan looked puzzled, and asked, "How?"

"That you must ask me on Saturday," I rejoined. "To-day is Friday. I don't know how, but he must be settled, somehow. Take this note down to Roderick Gympie; leave it as you pass. It is asking him to call here this evening, and see me for a minute or two."

When alone I worked out the problem thus:—Culgoa and Fly the Garter belong to me. I will put jockeys on both of these, with instructions that they are to follow Pink 'Un and bump him if I can't bump him before he goes out. Their mission will be to bump him, and keep on bumping, even if they break their jockey's neck on Pink 'Un. King's Majesty will be sent to win—must win. Pondering over this scheme I sat, for an hour or two, and awakened from my cogitation by the appearance of Roderick Gympie. I came to business at once.

"You are a member of Tattersall's, and you have

the run of the place?" I said. "I want to back a horse, an outsider, for Saturday. A horse called King's Majesty."

"Why, dear Mr. St. Clair," said young Roderick, with all the freedom of his honesty, "My dear Mr. St. Clair, that horse is not worth two pennyworth of broken cakes. There are three or four things in the race that will beat him. Pink 'Un is sure to win. I was talking to the owner at the club last night, and he says that if the horse gets a fair run, and no interference, he is absolutely sure to win. Nothing can stop him. The trainer thinks the same."

"Yes; I was backing him to win me a lot of money," I said, "I think Pink 'Un will win. But I have had news from London about this horse, King's Majesty, and as he has done good work, and is as well bred as anything in the land, I intend to put a couple of hundred pounds on him."

"Why," said young Roderick, "for 200 dollars you can book 20,000 dollars. He is a 100 to 1 chance?"

"Well," I said, "here are dollar bills to the extent of £250, and I want you to go to the room to-night and dribble this money on him at 100 to 1, that will be £25,000. I have a presentiment that this horse will win. I cannot get it out of my mind."

Roderick smiled, and said he hoped I was right. When he had taken the money and departed, I immediately sent for my waiter friend.

"It is your evening off, I understand?" I said.

"Yes, Squire, sure."

"Well," I said, "I want you to go round to the betting shops—those that will pay—and dribble £100, or £200 for the matter of that, on a horse in the Champion Race to-morrow. I mean King's

Majesty. He is 100 to 150 to 1 now. He is considered a rank outsider. So, hire a vehicle that will take you from shop to shop, and put one or two pounds on here and one or two pounds on there. Get the money on. It is a cash transaction. Bring the tickets back to me. If you get through this amount, come back and get more money. I don't care how much. I have a presentiment this horse will win."

The whole of that evening was taken up by interviewing jockies, settling and paying amounts, and getting everything ready for the morrow.

The shoes were ready; the belt was ready, the jockeys were squared and fixed; and old Dad was on a mission trying to fix up Youthful Dave, the horse's attendant.

After breakfast the next morning I drove to a chemist whom I knew was crooked in every detail of his business, and experienced more joy in earning a crooked five-dollar bill than he would in earning a straight 20-dollar bill. I had a secret chat with him, and handed him a prescription for an overdose morphia injection—a drug that when used in a strictly moderate sense enlivens the imagination and gives man or beast heart, but when an overdose is used by way of injection it deadens the faculties and sends the taker to sleep. If I could once get Pink 'Un to sleep before the race started it would ensure me peaceful slumbers for many a night.

I received the morphia drug and a couple of hypodermic syringes. I was out for business—trifles were not going to stop me stopping the favourite even if I had to puncture his galloping strides with morphia from my hypodermic machine.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—A RACE FOR A FORTUNE. BLUEY AND THE DOPE.

THE race day was bright, fresh, and warm. The sun shone on the blooms and the variegated foliage in the garden below. The chirruping of birds and the bustle and excitement acted on one's nerves as electricity, and gave a drooping soul a buoyancy that begat an elastic gait and the light step of youth. The day was a national holiday. The champion race was to be run. All eyes were turned towards the race-course. All tongues spoke racehorse; all thoughts were on the doubtful problem of who would win.

Dreams and signs were unfolded to order, and offered a presage of good luck to the dreamers; indeed, good luck and dreams were at a premium, and the supply nearly ran out. Everybody wanted to be interested—that is, to win. Every second man one met had some strong intelligence, straight from the stable. Individuals less favoured were cornered off, and whispers were mumbled into their ears through the beery breath of enthusiasts who had bagged the information that “so-and-so” was dead sure to win. News and tips from the stable or stables flew about the city of New York as thick as a heavy bankrupt's bills. One would say, “My mother washed for the head trainer's aunt, and the stable secrets are given to our family as a farmer would give dirt to growing corn. It's simply a matter of sit down and listen, and go away and get rich in a hustle.”

Excitement ran high. Of course, old Dad was

all importance. His preparations caused his skin to work furiously, and in the process collar after collar became a wet rag. He had fixed everything O.K. The horses were about to start for the course. His chief trouble was the favourite who, with a fair go, could not get beaten. It was serious, and Dad counselled me to save myself and get round quick and lively by backing the favourite to recover my expenditure on the other "lurks," should the favourite hop home on his pat.

"Not a shilling," I replied. "Not a shilling. I will bring him out of it if I die in the attempt."

Dad smiled, and shook his head in amazement, saying, "Well, well, my boy, you watch and see. These Yankees are very clever jockeys and it is 10 to 1 they will pool you."

Whilst we were talking, Roderick Gympie was announced. He had come to offer us seats in his father's drag. Dad and I accepted, and mounted the seats of honour on the top of the splendid turnout drawn by four dapple greys. The man of dry law and drier remarks (old Mr. Gympie) was there, spick and span, and Dad and he soon got to work chaffing each other. I was in a serious mood. I was sick. The whole business had got on my mind and nerves to such an extent that I was almost on the verge of a collapse. The spectre haunting me seemed to say, "What if the favourite should escape bumping, and win!" What an earthquake for me! It would swallow up all *en* "globo." What if I could not perform the trick on the millionaire's horse! What if my luck was dead out, and the fruit withered and crumbled away before it ripened in my grasp, like dead sea fruit, looking fair to the eye, and powdering to nothing in the grasp of avaricious man!

The game I was playing was a big one. It was a race for a fortune—or for failure. The slightest stumble, and we were all gone. Gone for ever. For, once you fail in big or little matters where money is at stake, you lose your friends, and those disappointed will rise like hissing serpents before a prairie fire. I almost regretted that I had entered on such a tumultuous journey, but being in it I had to bear it. Yet I was sick, ill-tempered, and tired, and felt totally unfit for such a heavy *coup d' état* or the failure that might await me. I cursed the laughter and the mirth of old Dad, the joyous ring of his boisterous giggle. The jokes and yarns I once used to enjoy now grated on my nerves and irritated me. Upon my word, I now often wished old Dad was dead.

Before we started for the course I drank a small bottle of wine. But for that, I do not think I should have ever seen the course; but it was a false, false fire and soon died out of my veins.

Thousands and thousands of enthusiastic spectators had already arrived at the course and secured positions. Some had been there long, long hours. Many were debating with energy the pros and cons of past favourites and the time of their performances. Some were inspecting the course as though life and death depended on it being in order. Others were minutely gauging and measuring the steeple-chase fences and the brush hurdles. There was, of course, the retailer of the "straight tip, direct from the stable"; the unfold of dreams for a trifle; and the man whose stepbrother, by his mother's second husband, lived in the same street as the woman who knew the head jockey.

The sport and excitement was soon at its height. The first saddling bell had rung furiously for the busi-

ness of the day to begin. Old Dad and dear old Mr. Gypie were strolling arm in arm inspecting the horses. My good young friend Roderick was introducing me to all and sundry. I had an honorary admittance to the Members' Enclosure as a distinguished visitor. The owner of Pink 'Un was introduced to me. In his quiet, unobtrusive way he modestly assured me that his horse would win, and was glad that I had backed him. He chatted about Australia, where he had some friends, and we strolled out into the paddock. I begged the favour of his company to the horses' box, and he went with me like a true sport. This was my main card. In that box was the animal that stood between me and fortune. That box was surrounded and guarded with more care than the Crown of England in the Tower of London. Once introduced there by the owner, surely I could come and go as I pleased. I only wanted one or two "goes," and the favourite was gone for ever.

I made the most of the owner's presence with me at the box. I chatted to the trainer, to old Dave, and to the stable boy, all of whom were on watch. I was now at least on the ground floor; I was in their confidence. I patted the horse affectionately, admired him, was eloquent on his propelling powers, his quarters, his well-girthed-up loins, and his general stamina and healthful appearance, and wound up by doubling the bets I had laid the stable boy and old Dave. "I was a real toff, a toff of toffs," these wide-awake stable people whispered to each other. The owner and I left the box together. My first hand had been played well. I soon broke away from the owner; my business was now with the horse, alone

in the box, before the race, and everything pointed to my having access to him, bar accidents.

My two horses, Fly the Garter and Culgoa, the latter not worth a shilling, were being run in Mr. Roderick Gympie's name. He was pleased with the honour; so was I. I sent the boys riding each of these mounts to get their instructions from the owner, young Roderick. It was safest in case of a mishap. The Gympies were old members of the Club. They were committee-men, and their words would be taken for a million, whilst mine would not be taken for a pennyworth of wet salt—that is, if they knew me. The lukiest part of my programme was thus filled up with the honourable names of the Gympies. Roderick, in a honest, straight way, told the boys to go to the front and stop there. Patting them on the shoulders, and wishing them good luck, he said, "Win, my lads, from end to end." They had, of course, already had their instructions from me—at least, in part.

The first race of the day—a stake race for maidens—was now about to start, and the ten and twenty and thirty and fifty thousand people rushed to the stands, the fences, and other places of vantage to get a good view. While this race was in progress Dad and I, by arrangement, sat out absolutely alone, under a shady tree, to discuss our shady plans. I now, for the first time, instructed him. I said, "Here, take this syringe and needle. It is charged, and the moment you hear the cry, 'They're off They're off!' go up from the throats of thousands of fools, and the attention of all, from the millionaire to the dirty-faced jockey boy, is thrown on to the race, you enter Pink Un's box. Pat him on the neck in a friendly manner; ask his attendants if his ears are not a bit too hot, is he not feverish, is he quiet

or anything you like—but whatever you do or say be sure to get a hold of one ear with one hand, and then, as quick as lightning, prick, with this needle, the larger vein that runs along the neck to the back of the ear on to the brain. This vein feeds the brain. One sharp prick with the needle, press the syringe thus, and the dope is inserted in the horse's blood. In fifteen minutes he will be like a drunken man wanting a sleep. The dope is strong and effective. It is a desperate game, but it's the only way we have of stopping this horse. You have done lots of crook things in your life; don't quake at this, Dad. It means everything to us. You must not fail, for the very devil has possession of me and my blood is on fire. That horse must be stopped, if he has to be stopped with an axe. Yes, a broad axe."

"But why not bump him," piteously pleaded Dad.

"I don't like to trust to bumping," I explained. "Besides, my two jockeys may never get near him. They say he has so much foot for the first two or three furlongs that he will carry them clean off their legs, and if they can't catch him how are they going to bump him. If they don't bump him or we don't stop him, we are ruined. I think from what I can gather he will run clean away from them, and roll home a winner—and we will be lost. So, my dear old Dad, we will substitute doping for bumping, and you have got to be the doper."

"Me! Me!" said Dad, taking his eyes, for the first time, off the grass on the lawn, "Why can't you dope him, Bluey?"

"The business is yours. I am playing the leading character, and you must do something for your living, besides hobnobbing with old Gympie and drinking

cheap champagne. Here is the dope. Get to work at once."

"What is that cry?"

"They're off! They're off! The chestnut left! What's that in front? The favourite's beaten!" shouted thousands of dead mugs, the bulk of whom would go home dead broke. But it's these mugs that keep the game going for the benefit of thieves, such as me and my class of the lower and the higher grade."

Old Dad looked stupified. The strict instructions on my part to urge him to dope, and the screeching of the infuriated mob as the race was taking place, was too much for the old chap. He wiped the perspiration off his face, and, turning, looked me straight in the eyes and said, "Bluey, you are as strong as prussic acid, and twice as deadly. This means fifteen years in limbo if I am pinched."

Another moment he was gone—towards the stable. I saw the stable boy run out of the box and make for the fence to see who had won. I also saw Dad enter the box. It was an anxious time for Bluey Grey, and I swear to you that if I had not sat down I should have fallen down. My eyes were glued on that box, as the eye of a lynx watches the rising sun. At times I could see two doors, even three doors, to the box, as a drunken man can see two or three bottles where only one exists. The old man had entered the box, but would he ever come out? There's the rub. The minutes seemed hours, and the throng of people were coming back in thousands from the front of the stands as a flood would sweep a plain. The horses came trotting by, foaming and winded after the race. The scales enclosure—a moment or two ago a scene of animation—was now deserted.

Everybody seemed to be making for the box where the favourite stood—doomed—with old Dad. Would he never come out, or had the earth opened and gobbled him up, or had he been caught in the act and pinioned in the box? Pink Un's owner, the trainer, and several of New York's nicest people passed me on their way to the box. Now, they were within two yards of it. Still no Dad; and no news of the dope. The trainer entered the box, and a minute or two afterwards the horse was led out and unclothed for inspection. Then old Dad appeared with old Dave, the attendant, and there they stood chatting, and the crowd admiring the horse. Had it got the dope? Or had Dad doped himself and lost his senses and left me on fire to consume myself with my own evil thoughts? He did not even look my way.

There goes the bell for the next race. "That bell is my knell," thought I. Trainers passed with saddle, cloth and rubbers on the way to the scales. Boys were leading their horses about the green. New York's best of the best are inspecting and admiring their fancies, are astonished at anything and everything they see, and are laughing and chirruping and passing silly remarks and cracking wretched jokes with one another. Giddy girls and gawky youths stroll about as if God had put them on this earth for show purposes. Yet, no Dad! There, the black-hearted villain stood amongst the crowd gabbing and gaping at Pink 'Un. The horse looked the picture of health. He looked what the boys called "lovely"; fit to run for a kingdom.

"Burn that old fool, Dad," I said. "Will he never shift or turn his head this way? Would his neck were broken." At last he turned, broke through the

crowd and came towards where I was fuming with rage.

"Well, have yon done it?" I asked fiercely.

"It's no go, Bluey," said he. "You have a better chance, a ten to one better chance of being hung before dark than you have of touching one hair in that horse's tail. Old Dave never takes his eye off his head or his tail. It's no good fuming, Bluey. You can't own the world, and if you fall into the soup, well, you will only have to get out of it. I went to pat the horse, and the old bloke said, 'Beg pardon, Sir; no one must put a hand on him until after he wins. Those are my boss's instructions, and I know, Sir, you will pardon me for carrying them out.'"

I said "Certainly, my man, certainly." So, you see, Bluey, it can't be done. I thought all along that you would fall over yourself and land a good 'un on your own bingy, as the blackfellows say. You see, Bluey, you are too clever by six furlongs out of a mile. You want to become a millionaire too suddenly, without even buying a seat in Wall Street. The thing is impossible. Here Bluey, take your squirt (meaning the needle). It means fifteen years in Sing Sing or Chin Chin, or whatever they call their gaol here, and, Bluey, I do not want to get there—to end my days, singing "It may be for years, and it may be for ever."

Humming this air, the old coward sauntered away to seek out old Gympie and fill himself fuller—if it were possible—with cheap champagne. With an oath, I snatched the needle from his hand. I could not trust myself to speak what I thought of him; so merely told him to go and tell the boys riding Chatterbox and Culgoa to come over and speak to me, separately. Perhaps, I thought, he had courage

enough to do that, if nothing more. My plan seemed lost. The game was up. But I did not feel sick now; the tension and strain on my nerves had gone. Dad had failed—failed miserably. The boys had always told me he was a coward and a twister, but I liked his company, and his light spirits often helped to cheer my heavy heart, especially since the Countess and I had separated.

Poor Lena! She would have done it! What a brick she was! If she had been here that horse would have been doped, and she would have doped old Dave and the boy, too, into the bargain. Poor Lena! She was a great pal. How she would stick to a man, and pull him through and help him. I never missed her so much as I missed her on that day; and I never regretted her absence so much as I did on that day. As for old Dad, robbing a drunken man of his boots in the park was about up to his courage. I swore that I would never again encounter such old fools, whose eyes and ears were purging thick amber and plum-tree gum, whose senses were deadened with drink and debauch.

Grasping my grappling iron—that is, the needle—and the dope with a firm hand, with a firm step I made for where the boy was walking Pink 'Un about on the Lawn, followed by a mob of admirers. I had laid the lad a good wager to nothing, and was on the ground floor of friendship with him. The lad who was to ride Chatterbox met me as I was going to Pink 'Un. I explained to him all I dared explain, and promised him ample reward. Bumping was his occupation in the race, but I did not like the look of his little smug mug. He would sell his mother for brass, the boys said.

After I had finished he whimpered, "I will do my

best, Sir, but I cannot take risks. I have a mother and three sisters to keep by my work as a jockey. My father is dead, and I am the only one to keep the home going."

To blazes with him and his home, his father, and the whole family. What had they to do with me? I wanted a boy who would bump the favourite and ask no questions, and he could then get enough money to keep his family in affluence for life, and pay for prayers for his dead father, into the bargain. He was a rank coward, a narrow-brained gentleman with a rat chin. However, I patted him on the back in a friendly fashion, and assured him that he would acquit himself well and whatever happened to him he would be paid well.

He smiled, and said, "Yes, the last bloke I rode for promised me a million before the race, but after the race I could not find him to get a cent."

The other young joker next appeared. He had the mount on Culgoa. He was a smart, bright wide-awake young gentleman. He was out for money every time and all the time. He agreed to put the favourite on the rails, or over the rails, if necessary. But he wanted something down, as all the members of his family had been ruined by such promises that he had little faith in the traffic in them, and a trifle as an earnest of what was to follow, say \$200, would give him good heart and a stiff muscle to enable him to bump the favourite. I gave the young imp the money, and I inwardly swore it would be the last.

As he left me he winked and said "The favourite will never hit the ground when I come on to his quarters."

Old Dad now bounded up, pretty well on the drunk. He had been telling some of the committee some

funny Australian stories. I wished that he would drink himself to death on the spot. The Swell was looking after the loaded shoes and the loaded belt of the riders of Roosevelt and Fly the Garter. My work was still before me. I had to dope the favourite myself. It was a perilous task. As old Dad had remarked, it would mean 15 years if I were caught.

I cursed the fate that dragged me into this business. Yet I was not going to be hustled out of it, nor hustled away by funk. The odds were great. I decided to take the risk, and try. The second race was over, and the first bell had gone for preparation for the third race, the champion stakes. This was the race that fate had put in my way, either to make or to mar me. As the moments slipped by and the excitement increased, the mob of spectators gathered around the favourite as he walked out on the green lawn to keep his muscles supple. He, indeed, looked a majestic animal, full of quality.

I stood some little distance off, and to my amazement I saw the head groom, old Dave, with the saddle, the cloth, and the lead bags, accompanied by the jockey to be weighed out, the trainer and owner bringing up the rear—all making for the weighing machine. The horse, Pink 'Un, was still walking on the lawn, led by the stable boy. The crowd had dispersed somewhat, and only a few lookers-on, about the Lawn. The boy was a silly little coot. My presence seemed to overwhelm him. My chance had arrived, now or never. One bold stroke, one puncture with the charged needle which I held secreted in the palm of my hand—and the game was mine. I approached the horse and confidentially told the boy that I had backed him to win me a fortune. "Take the

horse away from these gaping onlookers," I said to the boy. "You can see how he is starting to sweat. He is getting restive. Walk him about."

"Stand back!" I said to some others, "This horse will kick the eye out of a mosquito. Stand back—here stand back."

"Yonder is a shady spot," I said to the boy. So, off we marched—the horse, the boy, and I—to the shady spot to do my shady work. No sooner there than I patted the horse, affectionately. I was very nervous and excited. The boy was still right at my elbow, watching me. Time, however, would not wait, for, by all the imps of the lower regions, there came, at a quick march across the lawn, the trainer, saddle in hand, old Dave, and the jockey, who had been weighed out. They were within 100 paces of me, just across the lawn, taking a direct bee line to the horse to saddle him up and go to the post.

"Fix that bandage on the off leg," I said to the lad. He rushed to the further side of the horse to fix the bandage. I held the horse's head down, and my hand crept along his neck to the back of his ear. I found the brain vein in an instant.

"Tick! Tick!" The horse gave a slight jump. My needle had done its work. The morphia dope had found its hiding place and at last was lodged in the blood of the favourite. I had hardly drawn my hand from his neck and dropped the needle in my gaping pocket, when old Dave and the jockey and trainer arrived at the horse's head. The thing was done in an instant—done effectually. I felt the blood almost leave my heart, my lips quivered, my hands trembled. But the poison was in the horse's blood. Time alone could eradicate it.

"What!" said the trainer smiling, "Mr. St. Clair, have they made a groom of you?"

I could not reply. A sickly smile must have played on my face, my lips parted, and I just glared at him. Fortunately for me, he was too much engrossed with the important occupation of saddling up his charge to notice my condition. I got away from the doped horse and his duped attendants, as quickly and decently as I could. The Swell, who had been watching me from afar rushed up, and exclaimed, "Bluey, you are a gentleman. I saw the act. You did it well. Shake!"

"For pity's sake let me have a small bottle of wine," was all my parched tongue could utter.

The Swell half led, half dragged me to the nearest liquor bar, and the wine was consumed. It revived my disturbed nerves. When I had collected my thoughts I asked:—"What price King's Majesty."

The answer came, "25 to 1."

"Here take these six bills, they are \$250 each. Dribble them on at that price. Here comes Mr. Roderick Gypmie."

"Well, what have you been doing to yourself, St. Clair. We have simply lost you," said Roderick.

"By Jove, old sport, you are in the soup over your bets on King's Majesty. It is whispered about that he is dead for the favourite."

"Well," I said, "I will back him to win me another 20,000."

Roderick tried to dissuade me from what he considered to be a mad course, but we were soon in the ring amid the bawling of prices of different horses by different bookmakers. "Evens on the favourite, 10 to 1 bar one, any price outsiders." "25,000 to one,

King's Majesty," yelled out one fat, sleek, well fed, and properly groomed son of Israel."

"I will take that bet," I exclaimed.

"What name?" asked the "bookey."

Roderick guaranteed me.

"I will lay it again to you, Sir, if you are game, my boy," screeched the man of the chosen race.

"I will take it three times," I exclaimed.

"Done!"

"I have got 25,000 more at the same price," yelled another individual of chops and whiskers, "Will you have it, Sir?"

"Yes," I replied, "Double it if you like."

"No, thank you," was the reply.

As we passed through the ring I booked two other bets of 25,000 to 1,000. Roderick was astounded, especially as half the sons of the tribe of Judea had refused to lay the favourite at any price.

"Let's see the horses before they go out. They are in the ring for inspection. Come along old man."

"Here they are," said Roderick.

The chance of seeing how my dope worked was acceptable. The Swell came to me with the tickets for cash amounts, and whispered that everything was O.K. "Bluey," he said, "I saw the loaded belt on the boy, and the shoes on. Do you want anything further?"

"Yes, yes! The most important of all. Tell the young imp on Culgoa to mess and humbug—or, as the blacks in Australia would say, 'Gindi'—about the starting post as long as he can. Even take the risk of cantering his horse back a furlong, kidding that he can't hold him. He must keep the starter from starting in the field fully six minutes at the post—that's all I started Culgoa for. Tell the kids this is

the way to beat the favourite, who is fractious and wild and plays up at the post. If the youngster does as I bid him, the favourite's energy will be spent, and not only will he not win, but he will not get a place. You see," I confidentially whispered in the Swell's ear, "my game is to give the dope time to work."

The Swell was soon on his mission, and we arrived at the ring in time to watch the horses parade.

My eyes were on the favourite. Was the horse properly drugged? If so, was the true drug working? I was nearly sure it was. Every now and again he stopped and glared stupidly into vacancy. When urged on, he put his head near the ground, started to paw, and seemed inclined to roll or sleep. His eyes had the glassy glare of a drunken man, he was foaming slightly at the mouth, and was sweating profusely. I would bet on the dope—every time.

His trainer was looking at him with anxious care, whilst his owner said he could not lose. Indeed, the good, easy man was the most confident man on the course. At last the bell rang to go to the post. The horses were led out on to the straight to do their preliminary, before tens of thousands of spectators. Every man and every woman, and, indeed, every child, cheered his or her fancy. I hurried to the stand and, glasses in hand, took possession of the steps. I was almost breathless to see the favourite go out—and go under. In his preliminary gallop he was very "short," like a horse sore.

"I do not like the look of his movements," exclaimed an old gentleman near me.

"He will move all right at the right end" said a portly dame—who might reasonably be labelled "A study in fat"—robed in black and white.

The favourite paused again on his road to the post.

He looked in a silly fashion at the sea of faces that stared at him. He pawed the racing track, and actually tried to lie down. The jockey—a crack English lad—gave him a cut with the whip which livened him up a bit, and then they all trotted to the right angle of the course to the starting post. I knew now, for certain, that the dope was working. I searched my wallet for dollar bills. I had just a thousand left. King's Majesty had extended out in the betting to 30 to 1. A blatant bookmaker—with a face like a full moon, or the rising sun, or a bit of each, and a voice that sounded like a cross-cut saw scrunching through a hollow log—yelled out, "30 to 1, King's Majesty." I planked my \$200 bills in his clammy hand. He planked his ticket in my hot and burning fingers, and bagged the "boodle" with a smile that seemed to say, "Johnny, you're a long way from home."

Another small bottle of wine, and I got back to my stand on the steps.

The horses were now at the post.

"What is that giving so much trouble?" "Ghee!" "It's kicking the rest!" "Where's the favourite?" "Now they are lining up!" "Oh! Why the devil don't he let them go!" "Something has turned round now!" "What is that kicking on the outside!" "Now they are going up in a good line!" "What is that in the yellow jacket?" "There! Now they are off, sure this time." "Ghee!" "Will he never let them go?" "Why! there's that thing giving trouble again." "He's gone the wrong way; he mistakes the course sure." "What is that turning round?" "Why! It's bolted!" "It's full a furlong back from the post!" "Here!" "You with the glasses." "What is that there?" "Culgoa is it?"

"Ah! He might as well go that way as the other, all the chance he has of winning!" "Is that the favourite standing still near the post?" "Why, he's asleep, and looks as though he wanted a rest instead of a race." Such were the remarks of the excited enthusiastic dollar or two dollar punters that surrounded me as I strained my eyes through my glasses to see the position.

Just as the horses got lined up some one snapped in my ear: "What is that fractious thing at the back? They are coming into line, aint they, sir? Why, that starter is not fit to start pigs across a flooded river."

I was annoyed and bothered with their foolery. Still, these people had paid their entrance fee—their last dollar perhaps—and they were fully entitled to give their opinions and nudge their worried neighbours in the ribs and work themselves into a state of frenzy, otherwise they would not have what is generally called "a good time"—losing their money.

My glasses were on the post and the horses the whole time. The young brat on Culgoa was really over-doing his instructions. He had gone back fully a furlong to fulfil his part and keep the field at the post. He played up to his cue, splendidly. The favourite stood still at the post, and again pawed the ground and tried to bite the earth. He seemed in a gloom and sleepy, want-to-lie down condition. The dope was strong, and was evidently working on him. Now they are all in a good line at the barrier. The favourite was on the rails—a handy place to get bumped. The excitement was intense. All eyes were now strained on the field. One more caution from the tired starter, one more reprimand, one more boy

fined, the machine is touched, and it rises. Off they go with a bound—in the race for a fortune.

"They're off! They're off!" shouted a hundred thousand voices as the Club gong had now instanced the fatal fact. It was a good start, excepting that the favourite got the worst of it. They were fully three or four lengths ahead before he got going. Still, he was soon in the bunch, and, what with the clatter and the dust and the excitement, it was hard to distinguish one horse from another for a second or two.

"What is that left?" screeched a lanky, shrill-voiced individual on the right.

"The favourite?" "No, it's King's Majesty." "Where is Fly the Garter?" "What is that in the lead?" "Ghee!" "Where the devil is the favourite?" "Here they come!" "What a cracker pace!" "What is that moving up on the rails with Danny Carr's colours on?" "He will never get through." "No, they have stopped him." "It's the favourite." "No, it's King's Majesty." "Oh! Oh!" screeched thousands of voices as the favourite, who was running fourth, "Got a bump—a bump from Culgoa." "Ugh!" "He is over the rails." "No, he has recovered." "That bump nearly put him on his head." "Here, you with the glasses, is that the favourite?" "Gee!" "He is beaten!" "See how he is swerving." "Why for love me, darned if he aint falling back!" "He's last." "The race is a swindle." "No race at all." "Where are the stewards?" "Racing should be done away with altogether" screeched a little fat man at my feet. And so the scolding remarks rolled out from the multitude—the good old multitude; the mob that makes nations and uncrowns kings.

The bunch of horses had now swung into the

straight. King's Majesty led the way. The boy had a good healthy hold of him. Fly the Garter and Rooseveltdt were in close attendance, and Culgoa and Chatterbox followed in order at their heels. The favourite, who was a bad last, was getting further and further behind every stride. On, on they came with terrific speed. The people shouted and proclaimed as the winner the different horses they had backed.

King's Majesty was challenged by Fly the Garter, who crept up on to King's Majesty's quarters. "Would he catch him?" My heart was in my mouth. They were twenty yards from the winning post. With another leap he increased his position, and was almost level with King's Majesty, but the boy on King's Majesty draws his whip, and, with one supreme effort which almost lifted the horse off its feet, he shook Fly the Garter off—for a moment. Another bound, and Fly the Garter came on as game as a horse could come, and now his nose was in line with the saddle flaps of King's Majesty. The jockey on King's Majesty raised the whip and brought it down with terrific force on his mount, who gave one jump and passed the post winning by a neck. *He had won.* Yes won, sure. The people were dumbfounded. No cheer. No exclamation. They stared vacantly and gaped at each other, scratched their heads, and wiped the hot beads of perspiration from their foreheads.

I saw no more. I knew I had won. The favourite's position did not trouble me. I swerved on my stand and staggered, and, but for the iron railing I was clutching, would have tumbled over. My field glasses dropped from my hand and disappeared. A friendly hand placed his strong arm within mine, and half led, half carried me out of the crowd to a secluded spot, where a seat was shaded by a friendly cyprus tree.

There I sat for a moment or two, and then thanked my benefactor, who appeared a well-dressed swell. He soon disappeared. As the crowd was teeming back to where I was sitting I started to shake myself up. The shock then over, I looked for my glasses, but could not find them. My watch and chain also were gone; no doubt, taken by the friendly hand that acted the Samaritan in shifting me to this shady spot, where he could more conveniently rob me. I could not help smiling—a gun gunning a gun. Well, good luck to him, I thought; he may want the things more than I do. The Swell soon found me seated alone under the cyprus tree. Poor chap! He nearly fell over with excitement. “Bluey, old man,” he said, “I have a good mind to kiss you. You are a real love at the game. What! Are you ill?”

He hurried off for some champagne and gave me a tumbler full.

“Does all go well?” I asked.

“Sweet as a nut. The boy’s weighed in; the winner proclaimed. Bluey, what price Fly the Garter? What a good horse he is. If he had not been loaded with the quick-silver belt! By the lord, my heart was in my boots when I saw how he came on. The kid on top did his part by keeping to the loaded belt, but when they got before the stand he would not take any risks. Don’t blame the kid, Bluey.”

“A nice way to ride a dead ’un,” I remarked. “Yes, Fly the Garter put up a great performance with 12.3 on his back, instead of 10.3. It makes me shudder to think of our fate if he had not been loaded. He would beat the favourite fair dinkum.”

“The crowd roared and hissed and hooted Pink ’Un and its owner and reviled the stable generally. I had just a look at the horse. He is down in his box,

and cannot get up. Some say he has broken an internal blood vessel. The cleverest veterinary in New York will swear that it is intestine trouble. One bookmaker says the ring has lost more than a million dollars over the race. The public are furious, and every time Pink 'Un's owner shows his nose outside the members' stand they hoot like fiends. Both old Dad and Mr. Gympie are drunk and drinking each other's health. Young Gympie is looking everywhere for you. Give me those cash betting tickets, I will collect the boodle, and now you know all the news. Bluey, you're a trump! There goes the bell for the next race. Bluey, your fortune's made. What have you netted?"

"Don't ask me now. Take these cash bets, ask each bookmaker to mark them good for payment at their rooms at 12 to-morrow. I will not take a lot of cash about with me. I will borrow \$100 or so from young Roderick Gympie to take me home. I emptied right out on King's Majesty. You go, now, and do as I tell you. Then whip right round and assure the jockeys, the farrier who put the shoes on, and anybody who had anything to do with us—tell them that at 11 o'clock to-morrow they will be paid. Make some appointment for a meeting-place. Remember, let there be no hitch. I want no squeaking; no inquests. Our fortune's made, sure, barring accidents. There goes young Gympie. Give me a cigar, and call him to me. Get another bottle of wine."

I lit a cigar, and sat there under the cyprus tree. My life, at that moment, took a change. I dared not rack my brain to think what I had won, or what I had done. The game was a desperate one—one that might open the gaol fortress to me for fifteen years. I had smashed up the best horse in all America, and

I had shaken my own constitution. A fortune in money was the result. A big fortune; more, indeed, than would meet all my requirements. Yet inwardly I felt that the excitement and worry of the work, the getting of this money, had told on my constitution. My cough increased as my work and late hours were extended. I was conscious that man is but a machine that would do its work properly and faithfully, if not over-taxed, but, once the gear gets out of rig, sleepless nights, heart palpitation, and fits of indigestion follow, and the end may be close.

So my thoughts chased each other in confusion through my heated brain. Three persons passing almost within a yard of me, broke in upon my reverie. With a bound I jumped to my feet, involuntarily exclaiming, under my breath, "Good heavens! There is my little Chicago girl. By Jove! And her mother, too. As sure as day it is she. Yes, and no other." They were exactly the same as when I left Chicago in a hurry. She quiet, innocent, and simple-looking; her mother the same old dame, over-dressed a bit, with a hideous bonnet with feathers flying in the air, but still the same old mother. A tall gentleman accompanied them.

So at last I again saw Marjorie and her mother. They were the last people to occupy my thoughts a moment before. "Can fate have brought her across my path for ill or for good? Who knows? Who is the swell fellow with them?" I wondered. I felt jealous of him already. I watched them with my eyes as far as they would stretch. They turned the corner, and went into the ladies' part of the Members' Enclosure. See! He helps Marjorie up the steps. She smiles at him. "Perish him, whoever he is!" I said to myself. "Why should she smile at him?"

Thus were my thoughts piling on each other when a friendly hand gave me a slap on the back with such force that my artificial teeth nearly left their posts as grinders-in-chief to take up their residence amongst the grass on the lawn.

"Put it there, old man, if it weighs a ton. By Jove! old boy, you are the very devil's child with the devil's luck, but it was nearly up with you, two strides more and you were gone for ever, or if the jockey on King's Majesty had not drawn the whip the moment he did Fly the Garter must have won. That is the general opinion. However, there is my hand again and again, and I congratulate you from my heart, although I lost my little bit on the favourite."

"No! you didn't, Mr. Roderick"—for the speaker was he—I said, "I put a few pounds on the winner for you, and as nearly as I can calculate you are a winner in about \$2,000."

Roderick looked surprised. He smiled, and thanked me, and then, with a knowing look, said, "Didn't I catch you staring after that young lady who went up to the Members' Stand with her mother. She's Miss Marjorie Hampden, from Chicago. I know her family well. We did their New York business once. She is not an oil painting, but she's a gold mine," he added, laughing.

"I met them once." I said, "I would like to know where they are staying, and how long they are staying in New York."

"I will find that out in a second," said Roderick, and was off with a bound and great strides, his long legs covering twice the ground of an ordinary man. He was soon back, with the tidings that they were staying at a swell hotel, and were not returning to Chicago for several weeks. The gentleman who

accompanied them was Lord Fitzmount, an English aristocrat, whom, Roderick said, general talk or scandal credited with being on the look out for an heiress—that is, an American girl with dollars, but no title. The lord had the title but no dollars; so if they could pool their dollars and titles by being hitched up for better or worse—it's generally worse, worse luck—the heads of the respective families would die happy, and, of course, the bride had, in her happiness, the prospect of dying in the poor-house if she allowed her lord to go the pace at a cracker rate as becomes a real lord when handling American dollars.

Young Roderick—that good-natured, splendid specimen of a young American—now took charge of me. “Come along St. Clair,” he said, “don't mope here. You have won a barrel of money on the nag; so what is the use of fooling under this deadly cyprus tree. Come over to the Members' Enclosure. We will have a ‘nip’ of three star and a good cigar, and I will introduce you to the toffs of our turf—New York's choicest.” He took my arm in an affectionate manner, and we sauntered to the enclosure, he chatting in his manly fashion, while ever and anon his laugh pealed out and echoed all over the place. As I looked at his intelligent face, which lightened up at every fresh laugh, he made me a thousand times wish to God that I could have been born and reared like him—a man of honour.

The enclosure was crowded as usual, and strong comments were openly made about the absence of the Governor of New York. It was delightful, after moping under the cyprus tree, to get in amongst the merry laugh and ripple of mirth of the healthy-minded throng of human beings that crowded the

enclosure. Virtue and vice intermixed and rubbed shoulders, if not noses. All social grades were levelled within that sacred fence, and good fellowship alone existed in the scramble for the almighty dollar.

With such thoughts in my mind I mused, "Personally I have no quarrel with society. Am I a moralist? No. I have done my best to beat the thing called society, and I have won every time, and I know full well that the moment society lays its heavy grappling irons on me, I am gone a million. I have tried both sides of the game."

Young Roderick was not long in commandeering a motor car to take me to my hotel in New York. He was a dear, good chap, and I think if anything in this world were to make me square, it would be the fine example of this man. When we got started, had lighted our cigars, and were well on the road, he said, "Oh! by Jove! St. Clair, I have a message for you. Guess who from."

I couldn't guess. My brain was busily working up how much I had won on the race.

"The message is from your lovely mash, the Countess."

"Will the devil never cease to torment me with that woman?" I thought. "No sooner am I out of one whirlwind of misery and trouble than an earthquake presents itself to me. The Countess now begins again."

"Yes, well, how is the dear Countess?"

"Tip-top! Splendid. I saw her last week. She is doing her time like a toff. Everyone speaks well of her, and her message to you was, "Tell my beloved that I think only of him. I am his, body and soul."

"Oh! Ghost of Father Abraham," thought I, but said aloud, "Are you sure she said that?"

"Positive."

"She didn't really say 'body and soul,' did she?"

"Those were her very words. Tell me! Are you married to the Countess?"

"Married!" I almost screamed. "No."

"She insinuated as much," Roderick remarked.

"How long has she got to do?" I said, not wishing to continue the subject. "She has not been there many weeks. Surely, it must be some considerable time before she will be liberated?"

Roderick looked sympathetic, and in a kindly tone said, "But they are going to get her sentence reduced by about one half."

The devil they were! Here was a go! I had other thoughts now far and beyond the Countess. This morning I wished she were on the course with me. I declared her to be a good pal. That was when I wanted to dope the horse. She would have done it. None so quick, none so sure as she. She would dope the men, too. But all was now changed. My little Chicago flame had come on me like a sunbeam after a thunderstorm, and she was my rainbow in the horizon. She was to be everything to me. I had her once in my arms, like a trembling pigeon. Her hot and burning lips met mine, in the excitement and frenzy of the moment. I would swear that the kisses I imprinted on her burning lips were the first semblance of love she had ever tasted. Girls do not generally forget their first love. Neither age nor adversity, trouble or exaltation can erase the memory of the first kiss of love.

How to get near her? How to explain to her mother the reason of my rushing away from Chicago? I decided, there and then, to rope young Roderick into the business and let him play a respectable part

by landing me back into the society of mother and daughter—and, of course, the live lord.

We were soon at my hotel, and Roderick rushed back to the race-course to see the last race. I had told him as much as was safe about Marjorie, and he promised to do all he could. He said he would call on them next day and beg the mother's leave to bring me to dinner in the evening.

That was all I wanted. I was tired and worried, but I made a list of my winnings, and the bookmakers and people with whom I had bet. My trusty waiter brought me some coffee, and took off my boots and outer garments. I told him to awaken me at 7.30 for dinner, and I was soon asleep dreaming —— of Marjorie? No, not Marjorie, but the Countess. I thought she hovered over and about me like a terrible spectre. A look, borrowed from hell, was on her face. Her hair was dishevelled, her eyes bloodshot, and she held a fearful dagger in her hand. She always seemed in trouble. And so I slumbered restlessly until my faithful waiter woke me to dress for dinner.

CHAPTER XXIX.—WITH MARJORIE AGAIN.

A GENERAL settling up took place the next day. The Swell, old Dad, my waiter, Roderick Gympie, and I spent the best part of the day collecting. I had won just 120,000 English sovereigns.

In the evening paper the following announcement was made:—

THE CHAMPION RACE

The Champion Race that caused so much speculation, excitement, and loss to the general public, turns out to be not such a "soft snap" for the bookmakers, as King Majesty was backed for a very considerable amount by a young English, or rather Irish, member of the aristocracy, named Mr. Duncan St. Clair, of the St. Clair judicial family of County Wicklow, Ireland. It is understood that our esteemed citizen, Mr. Roderick Gympie, jun., acted as "sponsor" to Mr. St. Clair, who certainly deserves his good fortune for his courage in backing a rank outsider for so much money, especially so when it was known that the stable who owns and trains King's Majesty had not one cent on the horse, but were going for the stake alone. Lovers of true sport will be glad to know that Pink 'Un is on a fair way to recovery. Intestine trouble was the cause of his misfortune; at least, so say the veterinary surgeons, and they should know.

My parcel of dollars now being safe in the safest bank in New York, I proceeded with all care to dress to dine with Marjorie and her mother. All being ready Roderick and I drove off to the Hotel. Old Dad, spick and span, awaited us in the hotel vestibule. He was so well got up that the ordinary house fly would think twice before resting on the old chap.

Mrs. Hampden, Marjorie, and Lord Fitzmount

received us in the drawing room. The old lady was nice, free, and friendly. Marjorie was stiff and cold, and seemed uneasy. The lord gave us a lordly "How-do you do?" and the tips of his lordly fingers. He was young, tall, and gaunt, with a prominent dial, pale or sallow complexion, and hair nearly sand.

At dinner Dad sat next the old lady—he was merely brought to tell her yarns. He was just the thing at the game. Roderick sat next his lordship; and I sat next—by pure accident, of course—to Marjorie. The dinner was so very formal that I felt uncomfortable. Marjorie hardly spoke; she merely answered interrogations. My presence was evidently unwelcome to her. Dad went the pace as well as he could on "cold water" and tea with the old dame. My lord and Roderick chipped in about the dangers of the black question, "Should niggers have votes?" and "The increase of the black races and the decrease of the white races." The blacks had full cradles; the whites had no cradles at all.

Amid the din of conversation I said, in a low voice to Marjorie, "I am leaving for Australia next week. Will you do me the favour of allowing me to explain to you why I left Chicago without bidding you farewell?"

The news of my departure gave her a little start. "Are you really going to that land of liberty—Australia, Mr. St. Clair?" she asked.

"Yes. Will you hear me before I go?"

After a moment's silence she said, "Yes."

The dinner and dessert being over, we sauntered into the balcony garden, with its ferns, flowers, birds, and lounges and easy chairs in profusion. Dad hung on to Marjorie's ma. Good old Roderick would not allow the lord to escape him. I had Marjorie to myself at

the extreme end of the balcony, away from the others. After very common-place talk, or what the boys would call 'sparring' on both sides, I opened fire on her. I explained the reason of my hurried departure, and said that if I had thought she had the slightest interest in me I would have gone back to Chicago, and on my knees asked her pardon. Still she was painfully silent.

"Now," I continued, "I am about to become a lonely wanderer in the bush lands of Australia—uncared for, unthought of."

She remained silent and scarcely raised her eyes from a palm tree at which she was plucking and picking. So I struck out into another line. I told her I had made quite a cart load of money since I saw her last. Then she spoke. She said she hated money. Girls with money were bought and sold by the weight of dollars they possessed. Tears came into her eyes. She seemed agitated and, with extended hand and almost with a sob, said, "Good-night, Mr. St. Clair."

I held her hand. It was hot and feverish.

"No, Marjorie, not 'Good-night' yet. You seem ill. Come into the drawing room and rest. Do! Only for a minute!"

She hesitated. Then, brushing her hair back with her hands, led the way into the drawing room. I made a comfortable seat for her on a high couch, and, seating myself beside her, asked her the cause of her worries. Could I not help her?—help her as a friend, a brother. Still she hesitated. "I know the world and the world's ways," I pleaded, "Let me be your counsel, if only for to-night."

She sighed, and said, "You do not understand my position. I am not ambitious. I yearn for a quiet comfortable home, not for a gay mansion with

scorching search lights of public gossip for ever on its portals. Titles I detest, as much as I do publicity. Yet I am signed on, as they say, to endure all these things."

"What!" I exclaimed. "Are you going to be married? Married to Lord Fitzmount?"

She hesitated.

"Tell me Marjorie," I pleaded. "Make a confidant of me, and if I can be of assistance to you, either before or after the marriage, I'd love to serve you."

Still she hesitated, and tears came into her eyes.

"You are only an inexperienced child Marjorie," I continued. "You have no advisers who know the world's snares and pitfalls. Let me be your confidant," I said, taking her hand. "Ah, Marjorie, will you not trust one who offers to act as a big brother to you?"

I pressed her hand. It was burning hot and moist; it trembled violently at times. It was plain that her whole being was agitated and on fire.

At last she said, "I am sure I can trust you. I am very unhappy, very lonely and undecided. My dear mother takes everything and everybody at face value. My brothers, of course, know all the ways of the world, but I cannot open my heart to them. They treat me—I suppose properly so—as a child, and are now—— Oh! Don't ask me to say more, please don't."

My iron grasp still retained her hand, and I drew myself closer to her and pleaded into her ear to continue and to trust me. Her eyes and cheeks were wet with tears. After a pause she said, in a low tone, "They are marrying me to Lord Fitzmount."

I dramatically let her hand fall and rose to my feet, as though stricken to the heart's core.

"Impossible!" I exclaimed almost aloud. Then I stood for a moment looking at her half in pity, half in anger. She looked up into my face and said, "The contract has not yet been signed. It's to be signed next Saturday, so they say."

"Marjorie," I began, "You are unhappy now, but if you marry this man you will be a thousand times more unhappy. I have a clear, though painful duty to perform, as a brother to you. I must set before your mother and your brothers some, at least, of the past history of this lord. Personally, I know nothing to his detriment, but the old gentleman who dines with us, Mr. Hautboy, knows the family and its history well, and will, I hope, consent to tell your mother.

Marjorie did not see the pungent point of my insinuation. She whimpered, like a lonely child, that she knew nothing of the lord or the lord's business or his affairs. Her brothers had fixed all up for her, and her mother had readily acquiesced. She was told to prepare for marriage—a marriage of advantage to her and her family. Everybody thought she was happy, but she was not, nor would she be after she was married. Happiness and she were miles and miles asunder.

Poor youngster. She was as simple as a kitten whose eyes had not been opened. I sat beside her, and again took her hand and asked her to promise me, on her word of honour, not to sign this marriage contract for at least two weeks. She could not understand my importuning. She repeatedly said that her brothers had fixed everything up and she supposed she must sign it. At last, after a struggle with a stupid but good little girl, I got her to promise that she would put off the signing from day to day for at least a week, to give me time to see her brothers.

I kissed her hand, as a brother would, and then flattered myself that she was mine if I played my cards or loaded dice properly. I had no intention of seeing her brothers, the pork sausage grinders. My mind was made up—to deal with his lordship. But, how? We joined the party on the balcony, and, as a parting reminder, I said, in an undertone, “Marjorie, remember your promise!”

She replied *sotto voce*, “I’ll remember, and not forget your kindness to me.” Then she smiled, and I pressed her hand in acknowledgment. None too soon, for her mother swooped down upon us and said, “Dear me, Mr. St. Clair, where have you and Marjorie been hiding.”

“Talking of old times, and the prospects of my having a fair passage back to Australia,” I replied.

“Oh! You are returning! How nice! What delightful weather you will have!” said the old dame, who wanted an English title for her daughter, and felt sure of getting it with me out of the road.

We adjourned for coffee before departing. I had a good look at his lordship, and concluded that behind that cold, well-bred reserve there lurked the nature of a profligate and libertine, if not a gambling drunkard. I watched him carefully, and concluded that he was mine, mine to deal with. Once he and his title were out of the road, Marjorie would be mine. Yes; for ever and for ever. The game was heavy and dangerous, but the stakes—Marjorie’s fortune—fully compensated the risks. I felt sure of a win, tie—or a wrangle.

CHAPTER XXX.—BLUEY ENTERS SOCIETY.

AFTER my meeting with Marjorie I felt pretty sure that if I worked the oracle properly I should soon be able to catch and claim her—and her three-quarters of a million. I was certainly in the running, and held a pretty strong position. But there were many fences to negotiate, and two or three ditches to jump that might bring a careless man a cropper. Thus I mused while sitting in the parlour off my bedroom, lounging in an easy chair, whilst old Dad stood with his back to the fireplace, and held up his coat tails to an imaginary fire.

"Well, Bluey, what is the game for the future?" he asked. "You have got Fly the Garter—a real good horse, a bosker—and you have got the other two mokes. You will have a string before you wake up."

"Well Dad, that is just what I want," I replied. "I intend to get a string of good racehorses, and open up a new life and a new mode of living. I will quit the game of thieving, pick-pocketing, lying, and fraud, and live in a high grade of take-em-down respectability amongst the aristocracy of England."

"The aristocracy of England!" gasped old Dad. "Why! You are stark staring mad, man. They would not let you in their backyard if the clothes were out a-drying. So, go when it's not washing day."

"Yes, they will. Worse men than I, infinitely worse, have climbed society's ladder, and are sitting on down cushions in the lap of luxury amongst the bluest of

the blue bloods in Europe. And why shouldn't I do it? I have worked myself up from a guttersnipe and a robber of hen roosts to be possessed to-day of about £160,000. I am forcing the pace with one of the richest heiresses America has, unhitched; and, as the Governor of every gaol I have *visited*, told me, I have plenty of brains and dash. Why shouldn't I use my brains, first to marry this girl, and then climb into respectable society, eh?"

"She will never have you. Brush that cobweb out of your brain-box," said Dad. "She's after the English lord. He will hook her, sure. You're not class enough. A thousand pounds to a half-penny cake, you're not in the running. If you are, it will be your ruin. Take it from me, the women always settle blokes like you and me."

Smiling, I said, "I don't agree with you. I will hook her, sure. Most women like titles, but all women like men for husbands—not dressed dolls who wear stays. This lord is as effeminate as a boarding-school miss. He is too well-bred and too superior, even for Miss Marjorie. When I get her in my arms again, she will know the strength of my muscle, and the passion of my love—if I have any. I once held her in my grasp in the summer house at Chicago, with all the danger signals hovering over her innocent head. I released her then—but never again, no, never again. I am playing now for her three-quarters of a million, and I will play in desperate earnest, with loaded dice, edged cards, or edged tools, to obtain a victory. Once I possess her, I must, of necessity, become respectable."

"Well, Bluey," said Dad, "You have got the luck of the devil, and if you get that girl you will have

the luck of all his imps chucked in. But you'll never get her, mark my word for it."

"There is no such thing as luck, Dad. Only weak men believe in luck. Had I not robbed Jinkins of Fly the Garter and doped Pink 'Un, what luck would have won me the race and bagged me thousands? None. 'Mould circumstances to your requirements,' is my motto. Luck legends are the refuge of lazy men and idle women.

"But, how in the name of all the pots at once, do you, Bluey Grey, the thief, intend to walk unhindered in the sacred circle of Society?" Dad gasped.

"If I were a workman, or in business, or an inventor, or even a sturdy defender of our common country," I replied, "I might have some difficulty in getting into Society. But I am going to enter Society per medium of high-class race-horses. If you own high-class race horses and run them for sport for yourself and profit for your friends—no matter how newly-made these friends may be—and then boom yourself and your horses sufficiently through the Press, you become a notability and immediately bend the stiff neck of Society. You own horses, win classical races, put your friends and their friends on to them, and the door of many drawing rooms in England will be thrown open to you. It's greed and avarice and a thirst of notoriety that prompts people to shake the horse owner by the hand and invite him to their houses. I have known a dirty-faced jockey—who emerged from the slums, with all the traits of the slums clinging to him—become the idol of dukes and duchesses. You can thief, and then thief again; you can blackmail, crush, and squeeze the life-blood out of the poor with your metal mines and your plantations; you can be the instrument of Tam-

many; you can be brother to the very devil himself—you can be all this, and more; still, Society will forgive you if you own racehorses and win classical races. But you must win, and let Society win with you.

“The millionaire malefactor who owns racehorses is chased after by Society, petted, fêted, and boomed by the silly mob who run Society—on a profit, if possible. Men in Europe who have boomed and busted mines, rigged the market, and rooked the public, time and again; men who acted first as spies against the British in South Africa, and then as spies for the British; scoundrels who have stooped to the lowest depths of degradation by fraud and swindle; men who, if their true characters were imprinted on their forehead, would wear their hats pretty low down—such men get into Society, on the third grade, of course, per medium of racehorses. Kings shake the hands that should be manacled.

“Surely, if ‘racehorse’ is the mascot that gets a once dirty-faced stable boy and now a fashionable trainer, together with the millionaire, into Society, what’s wrong with me? I am no worse, and in many cases not so bad as most of them, for the simple reason that my opportunities have not been so great. Opportunity is a great help. I intend to manufacture a full supply of opportunity, and that splendid specimen of manhood, Roderick Gympie, must help me. My ‘transmogrification’ from Bluey Grey the thief, to St. Clair the millionaire and horse owner, accomplished, I will give Society something good and free in exchange for its blessing and protection.”

Dad looked glum. He thought he was going to lose me, his pal. He trusted me, admired my ability, and did not want to part company.

After staring into vacancy, he said, “*They* won’t

stand you, Bluey. You'll get pinched 'first up,' and you know what that means. Outrage Society by being caught or bowled out—then, heaven in its mercy, help you! Man won't. My advice, Bluey, is to keep your own quiet game going, and avoid the eagle flights that will carry you too near the sun's scorching rays. It's dangerous, Bluey—I hate Society. Its only use is that it's easy to rob, and many's the man of our class that's got a good start by pinching Society's finery. Otherwise, it's useless. It's no good, Bluey, except for robbing purposes. No, no good! No good!"

"You're wrong, Dad. Society has many virtues beyond that of being easily plundered. It teaches you how to live at ease, enjoy your money, see all that's worth seeing, take the best, the cream out of life's luxury jar, and leave the dregs for the less favoured. In Society you live in a special atmosphere. Besides, Society protects its members. Suspicion of wrongdoing hardly ever rests on members of the best set, who shake the hands of kings. Think what a 'bridge' it is to pass over to bury the past and all its dead sea fruits. This life is hell upon earth. Society is the high priest of absolution and whitewasher-in-chief; and, with the aid of the booming Press, it must whitewash me. I'll start to-morrow. Roderick is going to invite me to his club to dinner and introduce me to his friends. His club is a swagger affair and very hard to enter, but I'll enter it as the first stepping stone."

"Oh! Bluey," chipped in old Dad, "do you know that that fellow Jinkins, with whom we were playing cards, died yesterday?"

This news was a corker. It 'shook me up a bit. However, I put a good face on it.

"What did he die of?" I asked.

"The papers say alcoholic poisoning."

"Well," I said, wishing to avoid further talk about Jenkins' death, "I'll dine at Roderick's club, ingratiate myself with its members, and promise them the straight tip for the races on Saturday next. If I can only put them all on to Fly the Garter and he wins, my path to Society is clear. I'll become a member of this crack club, and carry its credentials to England, the home of all classes of 'guns,' and walk out—Society's best. Here comes my waiter, Perkins."

"Now, Dad," I proceeded, "you had better go and 'chat' the old woman, Marjorie's mother. Give her the gloves, and Marjorie the basket of strawberries. Go on the father-of-a-family racket. Tell Marjorie's mamma, with tears in your eyes, all about the known, and unknown, infamy of his lordship, Lord Fitzmount. Get the poison working on her mind."

Dad left as Perkins entered.

"Perkins," I said, "I want you to come abroad with me as my personal servant. I like you, and what's more, I trust you."

"You lead Boss, and I'll follow," was his spontaneous response.

"Well, to begin: You must know by this time am no saint. I suppose you have observed that much, Perkins?"

"I am sure you're not here to preach the gospel or to plough the sea sands to grow corn," Perkins replied. "So, at one jump, tell me what I am to do, and I am at it like killing snakes."

"That you shall know later. Get permission to enter my service to-morrow," I said waving to him to leave the room.

That night I entered the sacred precincts of a

Conservative club, on Roderick's arm. It was the first time I had ever entered a club, a real club, by the front door. I had been a member of a Band of Hope 'club' out Sydney way, but left it, as all hope of profiting by my membership soon vanished, as dry leaves vanish before a whirlwind. I had entered other clubs in my short life, but not by the front door. Through the skylight was my usual form of entrance, when all were asleep or drunk, or both. I dined at Roderick's club, and, being in good form, conversed freely with the members. I talked of sheep and cattle ranches in Australia, gold mines, diamond fields in South Africa, the potentialities of a United Australia, and of the wilds of Madagascar. I smoked, but drank nothing, and thoroughly enjoyed myself and, I think, interested my companions. Americans are good listeners, and real good fellows, too. In their social life they are courtesy and consideration itself to strangers.

I rose to depart, and while shaking hands with my new set I said, quite carelessly, "Gentlemen, thanks for your kind pains to entertain me, and as a parting word let me beg of you all to have a few dollars on my horse Fly the Garter on Saturday. He is only in one race—the second, I think. He's sure to win—so pick up some dollars." With that I smiled, and they all bowed as though they were receiving the priest's blessing. It was my first shot at Society, but by no means my last.

As Roderick and I sauntered into the night air, he said, "By Jove! St. Clair; you're jolly good company. I was proud of you, to-night, my dear old chap. I'd like to call you pal, may I?"

"With all my heart, my friend," I said, pressing his hand.

From that night we were friends, friends beyond the contaminating influence of gold—gold that poisons and pollutes the purest stream of life's affairs.

But Roderick unconsciously struck a jarring note. "Oh! St. Clair," he exclaimed, "I suppose you know that the authorities have reduced the sentence on Madam, the Countess, by nearly one half?"

"Hang the Countess," I hissed, under my breath, "will she always torment me?"

"She sent for me yesterday," said Roderick, "but I could not go on the instant. I'll see her on Friday, and tell her all about your horse that's to win on Saturday."

"Gympie," I said "if you love me, avoid all association of my name with the Countess."

He opened wide his mouth, and stared in sheer astonishment into my face, but said nothing further. We parted—he, to his honest bed within the walls of his virtuous home presided over by his pious mother; I, to my restless hired bed in an hotel, to toss and roll about and dream of the Countess, the police, and all the disturbing elements that rack and ruin the brain of a man who has earned Society's deadly malice, and never knows what blow may fall on him, or when.

The races on Saturday were tame. It was an off day. My horse Fly the Garter won in the commonest of canters. He was nicely weighed for the event, but as I was suspicious of the boy on top, I got Roderick to walk over and interview the stewards, who gravely warned the jockey that their eyes would be upon him. If he didn't win handsomely, he would be shot out for life. He did win. I did not back the moke; a 2 to 1 chance was no good to me. This was

my first race in my bid for Society. So, I did the magnanimous thing by giving one of the most talkative stewards a modest "fiver" to put on. I was congratulated by all who had won. My health was drunk in the committee room. I was held up as an example of a Sporting Man whom it would be an honour to follow. Roderick nearly lost his balance in wine, so over-joyed was he at his pal's success; and I was invited to sup with the Committee of the Club, all of whom, by my horse's win, had added to the bulk of their wallet where they carry their cash.

The tide was turning in my favour. The club dinner was a tip-top affair. I was most reserved, and ate and drank little. At the conclusion, the Chairman cornered me off and asked me if I would like to become an honorary member of the club or, if I proposed to stay in America, a membership was assured me. I casually told him I was extremely obliged and would think it over and inform Mr. Roderick Gympie, my friend. So far, the stepping-stones were quite easy—the racehorse and cheap tips were doing good work. Hooray! for Society! Rotten Society!

CHAPTER XXXI.—A MAD MOTOR RIDE.

LORD FITZMOUNT was in my way to Marjorie and her dollars. So I must get rid of him. He was spoken of as a good sort of chap, had few enemies, and spent money freely. How could I get rid of him? I hit on a plan to attack his lordship on the morality ticket—a ticket that always tells among the immoral. I got my Yankee servant, The Swell, and old Dad to take his lordship on a “razzle-dazzle,” get him thrown out of a house, and dumped in a prison cell.

My plan worked well. His lordship’s disgrace caused the usual scandal; the Canary Press screeched and snapshotted; and the trade unions, who hated the Hampdens, screeched also.

Of course, the Hampdens were shocked. Ma Hampden talked of “taking the waters” with Marjorie. I agreed, and advised that Old Dad should accompany them, his part in the bill being ostensibly as tambour major-general to the ladies, but in reality as my trumpeter.

Eventually they set out.

Marjorie and her mother having left New York, I commenced preparations to take my departure also. My future business was “the girl behind the dollars,” and I thought I had got her “a bit good.” Her mind was weak at any time, and I was sure that my power of will could always predominate over hers, once I had caught her. But she had been well guarded by her mother, who must have heard her mention

me in her ravings during her illness. Therefore, I should have to work cunningly.

I sent my horses in charge of The Swell to Johannesburg. I had bought a *fac-simile* to Fly the Garter—a maiden (never won). He and Fly the Garter were like two peas in a pod, but for a little white on the flank and under the saddle. He was called Columbus, and, from the way he shaped, I think it would take him as long to win a race as it took Christopher Columbus to get Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain to give him a start on his New World hunt. I told The Swell to so ring the changes *en route* that Fly the Garter would land at Durban as "Columbus"—a maiden—after, of course, Columbus had been pitched overboard on the high seas. This would enable me to race an excellent performer, as a maiden, under the dead horse's name. Several other horses I also sent with The Swell.

Next I had my motor-car, baggage, and funds transported; and after an affectionate farewell to Roderick Gympie—who promised to write a long private letter to Marjorie, booming me up—and, after a message, cool and stiff, to the Countess, I left New York. I was ringing the Countess off.

When I arrived at Baden-Baden, Dad greeted me effusively with, "Oh! Bluey, I am glad you turned up. We are all in trouble."

"Trouble!" I gasped.

"Yes, in trouble. The fact is—Bluey hear me out—he pleaded, "it is not serious yet, but it might be. Well, Bluey, when I landed here, who should I see, togged up as a lady's page, but Weary Willie from London."

"That imp!" I said, savagely. "Why didn't you drown him? Well, go on. He has got you into a

mess, eh? Out with it! I almost see the bracelets on you. Go on, spit it out!"

"Well," said Dad in a half-frightened tone, "I engaged him."

"Engaged him! What for?"

"As page to Mrs. Hampden," gasped Dad.

I stood still, rooted to the spot. "Now by all the imps who light the fires of fury," I roared, "what made you bring that young reptile into our midst? Do you know where the end will be?"

Dad shook his head.

"Within the confines of the walls of Portland prison," I said solemnly. "He must be got rid of. I'll drown him in the hotel bath, and say that he died of an apoplectic fit whilst scraping the dirt off his hide."

"Hear me out, Bluey," implored Dad. "You do blow off! My old head can't stand it. You'll drive me dotty. Well, we put up a big job."

"A job!" I hissed.

"Yes, on the hotel where we are staying. It's all sweet, so far. We have bagged more than £12,000 worth of jewels, but—but they are still in the hotel, which is practically surrounded by detectives. It's only a matter of getting the stuff away. You can fix it."

"Yes," I replied savagely, "and get pinched—not me. I want to die in my bed—not in a chain gang. The chains have claimed enough of my race. Where's the 'parcel'?"

"Planted behind one of the panels in Marjorie's dressing-room. Willie and I did the trick whilst Ma and Marjorie were out motoring."

"Are you known or suspected here?" I asked.

"No; not much," Dad replied. "I am known here

as 'Uncle.' The folk think I am Marjorie's uncle. It's a clear-cut job. Now, Bluey, it's up to you to get the swag away. Will you hook on to it?"

"I'll do my best," I replied. "Go ashore. Tell Weary Willie that you have told me nothing. Don't allow a living soul to know I am in the joke. Don't drop a hint to my servant here—the fellow who was waiter in my hotel in New York. He is here for a special purpose. That over, he gets his ticket, and is gone. And, now, how does Marjorie and her old mother keep?"

"Oh, good!" said Dad. "Marjorie sometimes asks about you, quietly and shyly. Her mother never inquires about you, beyond wanting to know when you are departing for Australia."

My servant having taken charge of my motor, my luggage, and other belongings, I presented the Captain of the steamer with a gold cigarette-case. He was all gush, and I felt safe that if the detectives, or any of the passengers, sounded him about me, he would give me an AI character.

Marjorie and her Ma received me kindly, and asked me to dine with them that night. I did so. The dinner was formal; the talk commonplace. Marjorie looked happy, and said she had become an enthusiastic motorist.

Three days were spent in settling down, during which time the Chief of Police called to interview me. He was a chubby-faced individual, with a well coloured nose. In close quarters with him one enjoyed the aroma of a prosperous brewery. He came to warn me of the dangers of thieves. I was profuse—not to say lavish with my thanks—a cheap exchange for police vigilance. "Had the thief or thieves got away with the stolen property?" I innocently asked.



*Bluely asks a
question*

"No. The property has not left the hotel."

"Whom do you suspect? The servants?"

"No." As a great secret, he informed me that he suspected a sallow-faced youth, a page with, he believed, a record—his name was Velly Veery Villie. London had been telegraphed to for his photo. Scotland Yard was moving. And he winked, as though he believed himself to be all wisdom.

I promised to help him, if I could, to catch Willie. I ordered champagne, and begged the law-pillar to stay for dinner. I was his debtor, and would promptly requite his favour, with compound interest, before I departed to my cattle and sheep ranches in Australia.

Then I warned Dad, who, in turn, warned Willie. I spent the next two days motoring with Marjorie and her ma. The third morning I was "ill" (gammon); so my chauffeur took them for their motor drive, with instructions not to return before 10 a.m. This left the coast clear for Dad and Willie to unearth the jewels. Dad put a tale up on Willie that he had a buyer for the lot—a noted fence. During the absence of Marjorie and her ma the jewels were extracted from their resting-place and landed by old Dad in my room. Willie was ignorant of the move. I would not trust the brat. I locked my door, ripped the heavy felt lining partly off my Australian opossum rug and embedded the jewels in separate positions along the back of the rug, padded them in, sewed them into position, and, having replaced the heavy felt lining, stitched it on again to the opossum skins until the whole became as firm as a board. No one could tell by appearance, or, by handling it, that the jewels were there. Not even old Dad knew of my plant. I then threw the rug carelessly on the top of

a large mahogany wardrobe in my room, and later I informed my attendant—whom I carefully watched—that my boots, goggles, cap, fur-lined waterproof coat, and that old opossum rug were what I used when out motoring. "Leave them there," I said, "Then I'll know where to put my hands on them." The plan had worked splendidly. I was uneasy, however. The merest accident might discover the crime. I hate dealing with fools in these jokes. Give me a clever partner every time.

The hotel was still watched. Willie got a strong hint from another quarter that his future address might be permanent. Willie jumped on a steamer for Scotland, and so dodged Scotland Yard. I breathed freely when he had gone on the sea, and inwardly prayed that the sea would soon be on him—in full unstinted measure, even unto the overflowing!

Soon after my arrival, a grand ball was announced to be given at the hotel in honour of the German Consul's efforts to bring about a war between Great Britain and Germany.

I never was a good set dancer, but, considering that the aristocracy can only dance as kangaroos hop and jump, I pulled through somehow. As the clock struck midnight I took Marjorie through the corridor across the vestibule, which was partitioned off with flags, flowers, and festoons, every flag known being in evidence, except the British Union Jack. We strolled into the garden, brilliantly lighted with fairy lamps of different colours and charged with electricity. I lighted a cigarette, chaffed Marjorie, played with her, joked with her, but for a full half hour she refused to give me an opportunity to say what I

wanted to say. At last I said, "What do you say, Marjorie, if we get married?"

She was silent.

"You know in your own heart, Marjorie," I urged, "that we are fond of each other. Why should we not marry and live to love each other?"

Throwing away my unfinished cigarette, and growing warm to the proposition, I took her hand, held it, and told her my love for her knew no bounds. It was she, alone, I wanted; her money was dross, a penny of which would scald my fingers. "Be plain with me, Marjorie," I pressed. "Say, 'Yes'; or bid me hope; or dismiss me, for ever." And then I told her that if there were no hope in her heart for me I would depart at once for my own land of friends and try to find comfort amongst my own dear old folk.

She raised her eyes, and, speaking slowly, said: "I think I care more for you than for any other. I hardly know what love is; yet, when you talk of going away, I will be frank, and tell you that my heart is sad. But I could never think of marrying without my brother's consent."

That was a poser. Her brother's consent! That would never be given. I pressed her to my heart, and, as discreetly as I could in the lighted garden, pretended to be in raptures over her favourable answer. Her brother's consent would, I assured her, be only a matter of asking. Soon afterwards we re-joined the dancers in the ballroom, where I made excuse, and, throwing on my top coat, sauntered into the open to enjoy a smoke and meditate on my future move on the chess-board of the game for Marjorie and her three-quarters of a million. As I strolled along the

beautiful garden a voice said, "Lovely night, esquire! Eh?"

It was my servant.

"What are you doing out of your bed at this hour?" I asked.

"I am engaged watching things," he answered. "I was quite close to you when you were putting a pretty thick yarn on to that young heiress. She is simplicity itself, Boss. She loves you. Why not jump her into a marriage. It's only a matter of a few tears, a sob, and sigh—and then a sea of joy."

"How do you mean?" I inquired.

"Why! take her for a motor drive and forget to return. Steal her right out. It's a pretty sure way of dealing with weak, love-stricken maidens. It's worth the risk when there is big money in the pool," and he laughed merrily.

I said I would think it over. I hesitated; then, turning to go, I stopped and said, "Will you help me?"

"Help you!" he echoed. "Help you! You can have your last dollar on that ticket."

After seeing Marjorie and her mother to their apartments, I ordered a small bottle of wine to my room and left instructions that I was not to be called until 12 o'clock.

After luncheon I sent for my servant. We talked, long and earnestly, in my room with closed doors. When he had gone—after receiving my instructions—I strolled with Marjorie and her mother on to the sands, and built up tales of my wealth and influence.

As we were returning, the summer sun was disappearing in the west, and I noticed my motor come flying along with my faithful servant in it—all dust, dirt, and smoke. He had returned. I met him that

night in the garden. He explained the result of his mission and the plans he had laid. All was ready. The next day was appointed for the treaty of duplicity for the three-quarters of a million stakes.

After breakfast I asked Marjorie to go for a drive with me. Our chauffeur would take us into the country where we would see the beautiful farming districts, and return home in time for dinner. Her mother gave her consent, after being informed several times that there would be three in the party.

All being ready, I sallied forth from my room with my jewel-loaded opossum rug carelessly thrown over my arm. The rug I unceremoniously threw into the bottom of the car, and begged Marjorie to rest her feet on it. As we passed through the great court I raised my motor cap in salutation to the worthy detectives whose duty it was to find Marjorie's lost jewels.

My servant drove. Marjorie and I sat in the back seat. When fairly out of town I stole my arm around her waist and drew her to me just a little. She did not complain. I grew bolder, and pressed my lips to her cheek. At the Flying Fox roadside inn we halted and had tea. When we were ready to start again my chauffeur had disappeared; so I took the helm and drove on, and on.

After we had gone some thirty miles Marjorie took charge of the car, and I made desperate love to her. I importuned her to say "Yes!"—that one word, "Yes!"—for our marriage. I poured out the love of my heart, flavoured with a few intense passages from Shakespeare, such as:—

I am no pilot; yet were thou as far as that vast shore washed with the furthest sea, I would adventure for such merchandise.

Boldly I clasped Marjorie in my arms, and imprin-

ted hot kisses on her pale and imperturbable face. I promised her a home in my far-distant land. I swore, by the gods, and the goddesses to boot, that she was my world, my life, my all. If she deserted me, my end was at hand. She had taught me to love, to adore. She was my day dream; my night's most soothing balm. I wanted her love—not one cent. of her fortune would I touch. I would sign any paper, *after* our marriage, renouncing my right to her fortune, and thus silence idle and venomous tongues. My own fortune was ample for all our needs. My blood was as pure and as good as any in the land. My family tree had unbroken branches for a stretch of six hundred years. Poor child! She battled with this storm of words as best she could. She had no one to direct her. "If poor Jeanette had only lived, things would be different." I quite agreed that things would be different, *for me, at least*. Still she trusted me, and, if her brother consented, would marry me.

"My love, my life!" I exclaimed in ecstasy, "Do you mean it? Do you trust me implicitly?"

"Of course, Duncan—oh! excuse me—but, there, I may as well grow bold and call you the name I most love, Duncan; eh, Duncan?"

I responded with a kiss.

The sun was now fading in the west, like a great ball of fire. It looked like a danger signal. To whom? Marjorie or me, or both? The winds through the woods whispered, "Both! Both! Both!"

I took the helm and drove on, like a madman after dollars—Marjorie's dollars. After a good drive we drew near a lonely, straggling German village, passed through the turnpike, whizzed over the old rickety bridge, passed through a clump of weeping willows, and on to the outskirts of the town. Here we pulled



"Bluey—
"There is no need
to be afraid— come"

up at a large ramshackle sort of building of the early German architecture. One might have taken it for a farmhouse or an inn. It filled the bill for the latter. My faithful Yankee servant met us at the front door, near the high stone public watering basin. I helped Marjorie out, and led her to the parlour door, which opened on to a high stone verandah, newly whitened in expectancy of visitors.

"There is no need to be afraid. Come!" I said to Marjorie.

An old dame, with a woollen German cap and typical German costume, met us at the door. She was all smiles, and wrinkles, and toothlessness. She curtsied profoundly, backed into the hall, and begged me to follow up the winding, creaking stairs to a landing-place which was about 12 feet square. To the left, a door opened, and led into a long dining-room with two sleeping rooms off it. At the other end of the spacious eating-room another door opened into what I shall, in courtesy, call a lady's boudoir. Off this a large white room ran to the back of the building. Venetian shutters guarded the windows, which, when opened, gave the weary traveller a view of the serpentine river beyond. This room was known as "the bridal chamber."

"When are we going home, Duncan?" Marjorie asked, quite unconcerned.

"When the moon rises," I replied. "Dinner or supper will be served directly. My man is now fixing the tyre on the car. Come, my Marjorie, sit by my side and let us live on love whilst we may." She sat down and I embraced her. I told her rich tales of Australia, petted her, and showed her tricks with an idle pack of old cards that rested on one of the side

tables. The half-hour ran into an hour; it was now quite dark. Dinner was announced. Marjorie jumped for joy, for she was hungry. We had a quiet, wholesome meal, and then a stroll along the green, old-fashioned lanes of the village. As we were strangers, I ventured to place my arm about her waist. We strolled on, I doing my best in the love stakes. Marjorie was like all other women. The more love she got, the more she wanted. I put one goodie in on her when I said, "In steering to the haven of marriage, love should be the pilot; lucre the ballast."

When the village clock struck 9.30, the moon was making headway in its mighty march. Marjorie grew alarmed and urged me to return. Her mother would be frightened. She must really go at once. It would take a full hour to return to the hotel.

"Come, Duncan," she said, "we really must go."

"One word, Marjorie, will you be my wife?"

"If my brother consents, yes. Come along."

When we returned to the inn, Marjorie ran upstairs to prepare for the return journey, and my Yankee servant whispered, "Don't be a fool! Play your best card. If she slips through your fingers now, well, you're a blankety idiot."

I joined Marjorie and told her that we could not start for a full half-hour. Something had gone amiss with the car. Tea being ordered, my servant brought it in and handed it to Marjorie and me. She hurriedly drank hers. As I slowly sipped mine, I watched her closely. Her eyes seemed to get larger. Then she commenced to talk nonsense, became drowsy, looked stupid, and laughed strangely. The doped "tea" was working well. I ran for the woman attendant. The old hag came hobbling along. "See to your young mistress," I ordered. She grinned and fumbled.



When are we
going home
Duncan?

Marjorie had fainted. With the assistance of the old dame I carried her to the bed and petted her, but she was in a dead stupor. After a long wait in the dining-room, the old hag emerged from the bedroom and, in a half whisper said, in a hoarse croaking voice and smacking her thick and over-moist gums, "My lady is a-bed. I leave the door open to allow air to reach her." She grinned, and her eye was that of an old weather-beaten falcon.

I stared haughtily at her, and, as she still stood grinning, I put a sovereign into her grizzled palm and motioned her to be gone. When she got to the door she turned, curtsied again, and with a mocking laugh said, "Pleasant dreams, my lord. Pleasant dreams. - Ha! ha! ha!"

The door banged. I could hear her retreating footsteps on the cracking stairs. As if by instinct, I locked the outer door and listened at Marjorie's door, which was ajar. She, poor child, was breathing heavily. I turned down the light in the dining-room and entered my own bedroom, to divest myself of most of my cumbersome clothes. Next I put on a silken dressing gown, worked in Spain. It came my way, as most good things did; I bought it from a luggage rat. Having slipped my feet, I had a good stiff nip of three star brandy, lighted a cigarette, lowered the light, and strolled to the window casement opening out from the dining-room to the old-fashioned road-way below.

The moon and I were face to face; the cool breeze travelling from the south, passing through fields laden with ripe or ripening corn, reached my hot and throbbing temples. My thoughts were torturous. The black mind kept the black, tarnished spot aglow in the

troubled heart. I could hear Marjorie's breathing. She slumbered heavily. My cigarette had lost its fire, but my thoughts were aflame. I closed the window with a bang, as though to shut out the piercing rays of the moon, which could, I thought, already read my thoughts. I hastened to my room to prepare for rest. The brandy bottle stood gaping at me. I could almost see the tempter smile. I had another "nip." I declared that it should be the last. Looking out at my bedroom window all was still, all was hushed in sleep—death's counterfeit. Then I closed and fastened the window casement.

Another glass of brandy; then "good-night!" to evil thoughts. Thus, I sat in a reverie for more than half an hour. The village clock struck, in mournful solemn tones, the hour of midnight. I was almost stupid. The brandy fired my blood, and inflamed my imagination at that dark witching hour:—

The witching hour of night, when churchyards yawn and graves give up their dead.

What's that. A voice calls me. I listen. My name is repeated. It is Marjorie's. She again says, distinctly, "Duncan."

Another spoonful of hell's firewater that gives you courage when your courage is dead—and then I noiselessly go to her door. I listen. She still slumbers. I call her, "Marjorie, Marjorie." I push the door half open, on its screeching, idle hinges.

"Duncan," she murmurs. "Duncan, where am I? Oh. Duncan, tell me. Where am I? Is that mother, dear? Oh, mother dear,—dear mother."

Gathering my wrapper tightly about me, I entered her chamber.

"Marjorie, my love, my wife, you are with me," I

said. "I am, darling, keeping watch and ward over you. No hand shall harm you, my own beloved."

The light was dim. I saw a large bottle of wine and soda water on the side table. I filled a glass, half of each. Marjorie drank it to quench her thirst.

Then I bade her "Good-night," and kissed her a hundred times. She encircled her arms about my neck, and, in transport of delirious joy, promised to marry me.

"Yes, I'll be your wife. I love you—only you. Good-night; good-night," she murmured in her stupor.

Poor child! It was murder—Bluey murder!

CHAPTER XXXII.—BLUEY'S MAD WIFE.

THE next morning, daybreak found me staring through the open window casement. In all the sun's golden glory, the most momentous day of my life had been usheed in. My wrapper hung about me; I could not dress—my thoughts were confused, my senses almost deadened. I had tasted the honey. Now I yearned to steal the hive. I rang for my servant, who entered the room, all smiles and smirks, dry-washing his hands.

"A boisterous night out, Squire," he remarked quite familiarly, "The wind raged in such fury that it tore the trees up in the valley beyond. What's the matter, you look pale? Here, have a shower and a brush up. You'll want your wits to-day." He grinned, and pointed to the door that led to Marjorie's room.

Before I had time to check his volubility, the old dame came into the outer room, saying, "Rough night, my lord; rough night. How it did blow!"

"Tell her to take some coffee to her young mistress," I growled to my servant.

The old dame took the coffee, and returned with the joyful news that Marjorie was sleeping calmly and peacefully, and she would not then awaken her.

I dressed, and walked into the open to take the air and form my plans for the day. Marjorie must now be mine, body and soul. I explained the position to my servant, who said, "There's no going back now, Boss. It's fast binding, fast finding, now,"

"Get the motor ready!" I said. "I may want you to run back to the hotel."

No sound came from Marjorie's room. All was as still as the grave.

After breakfast I sent my man back to the hotel with a message to Dad to assure Marjorie's mother that all was well, to send Marjorie a telegram in the ma's name, and to advertise the elopement in the scandal column of the gospel-preaching newspapers. They would snap at such spicy "copy."

At about 12 o'clock Marjorie came out of her room, leaning on the arm of the old hag, her attendant. She was deadly white, excepting her eyes, which were scalded. She had been crying. I took her in my arms, dismissed the old beldam, and led her to a cushioned seat. She seemed helpless, and in a daze or day dream. For some moments she rested her head on my shoulder. Then, in a whisper, she said, "When do we go home, Duncan?"

It was no use fencing the question. She was fully in my grasp, and if I let her go—well, she was gone for ever. I petted her and replied, "When we are man and wife."

She gave a slight shudder.

"Marjorie," I said, "you promised last night to marry me. I keep you to that promise. Your happiness, your honour"—she shuddered again—"demands our marriage. I'll never leave this place until you are my own dear little wife."

She was silent for some time. "My mother, my poor mother," she suddenly burst out, "she will break her heart over me. Oh! Duncan, let us get out of this place. Oh, why did I ever leave my mother?" Then she cried hysterically.

"No, Marjorie. You are mistaken, your mother knows all," I assured her.

She looked up.

"Or nearly all," I added.

"I cannot marry you, Duncan, without at least my mother's consent. I will not," she simpered.

"Marjorie," I said in a well-assumed tone of anger, "You have fooled me long enough. Remember your promise; your honour; my good name; my family name (good old family); our future happiness. If you must have your mother's consent, write a telegram now. Tell her you propose to marry me, and ask for her consent by reply telegram."

Marjorie hesitated, looked rather stupid, shook her head, and almost fell back in a faint. A fearful struggle was taking place within that little substance of her body. I held her in my light embrace and whispered, "Shall I send the telegram? Say 'Yes,' Marjorie, my love, my wife, my all!"

She murmured, "If you please, do so. Oh! Duncan, leave me now to my own thoughts. I am so wretched." She was weeping.

I left her. I sent for the old hag and warned her not to leave the rooms, but to keep pottering about, with a careful eye on her young mistress; and to keep the outer door to the landing locked. Licking her red gums she whispered, "I know, my lord; I am an old hand at this business. We get plenty of it here." And she laughed—a harsh, croaking laugh.

Putting two sovereigns into her dirty palm I whispered, "Persuade her to marry me at once. Play on her fears and the scandal of her present position. Tell her of the secret joys of the married. Tell her how I love her; fill her head with the romance of runaway matches. Open that wine, and give her a

glass every half-hour. Above all, she must not leave these rooms. Lock all the doors after you."

Poor youngster! Never was there a purer or simpler prisoner. But, as I was getting anxious, I sent Dad a wire—in a form he understood—to send me a crook telegram conveying the consent of Marjorie's mother to our marriage. Then I strolled on to the road to meet my returning car.

I had not long to wait. My servant returned with news from Dad that Marjorie's mother was prostrated with grief at her daughter's flight. Dad was alarmed for the old woman's sanity. He did not like the fuss that was being made, and told me plainly that he wished he was safe at his old home in England. Still, he would be loyal. The real truth of the matter was, the old fool had notions of a union with Marjorie's ma, but so many difficulties presented themselves, one after another, the first, and not the least serious, being that he had already a full-weighted better half, who always got the better of Dad. These difficulties confused the old chap's brains—so he squared off the account by growling at me.

I returned to the hotel for luncheon. The telegram for Marjorie had already arrived. The old dame kept it back so that I should first see it. (It's part of our trade to read other people's correspondence.) It ran:—

Please yourself. I know you are safe. Be happy, child.
Fondest love.—MOTHER.

"Give that telegram to your young mistress," I said, "but don't tell her I saw it; and prepare luncheon in half an hour."

I allowed Marjorie full time to digest the contents of the telegram and cogitate over her position. She must marry me before she left the building. I was

now too near to her and her millions. Still, she was weak. She might at any moment turn sulky, refuse all consolation, and cry for her mother and refuse to consent to—well anything. Unfortunately for me, she was ignorant of the ways of the world and the depths of Society scandal. Running these things and the position generally over in my mind, I returned to the hotel to find luncheon ready and Marjorie a little brighter. She almost smiled in handing me her mother's telegram to read.

"Now, my own darling, happiness is at its height," I whispered. "You will, my dear Marjorie, be my wife this very day."

Her smile vanished. She dropped the telegram, held her head down, shook it, and sighed, "Not in this place. Not here, Duncan. Oh! I shudder at the thought of this place."

I thought—well, many things; but simply wheeled her off on to a happier path by saying, "Luncheon's ready! Come, my love."

The luncheon was more like a funeral breakfast. Marjorie was serious, quiet, and unhappy. Her position was now dawning upon her. She must not now escape me. Once out of my clutches, and she was gone for ever. I debated in my mind the use of actual force to gain her. This would be dangerous, and might end in a tragedy. For love, for tears, for fierce importunings, most women will do much, but few will yield to brutality. I heard bustling footsteps on the stairs. My servant had brought old Dad in the motor-car.

"Oh! oh! here you are, you pair of runaway truants," said Dad, fairly falling into the room, his face like the shell of a well-cooked lobster. He had certainly been having a good time of it.

Marjorie smiled. She seemed glad to see any face she knew with news from her mother.

"Oh!" continued Dad in his boisterous fashion, a pretty lot of talk you lovers have brought on us all. Why the papers are full of the matter. They call it an elopement. Look at the cross head lines in the papers:—

RUNAWAY MATCH.

CHICAGO HEIRESS ELOPES WITH A SCION OF AN
IRISH FAMILY.

LOVE RULES THE WORLD.

DOLLARS AND BLOOD WILL TELL.

A LOVE MATCH IN EARNEST.

I kept my eye on Marjorie, who had turned deadly pale. Her lips were white, and quivered; her hand played nervously with a piece of bread; her eyes seemed to fill. Would she break down? I feared so. I laughed outright, exclaiming, "Nonsense, all nonsense. These wretched papers must say something."

Still, Marjorie was silent. She saw, for the first time, that her honour was compromised before the world. I saw she was trapped. Another move or two, and she would be maimed and fully in the meshes of the conspiracy—for such it was. At length she half whispered, "And my mother, my poor dear mother. What does my mother say? Is she well? Please tell me."

"Oh," laughed Dad, "your mother enjoys the joke."

Marjorie could hardly believe her ears.

"Yes," Dad assured her. "Your mother says she would have run away with your father rather than have risked losing him. She thinks the whole thing so romantic—says it will stop your brothers interfering with your choice and, confidently"—Dad cautiously looked round the room to see that the

furniture had no ears, before completing the sentence—"and, confidently, she thinks you are already married."

Slightly trembling, Marjorie rose from the table, and I escorted her to her sitting room. When we were alone, she clung to me and wept piteously on my shoulder. "Oh! Duncan, Duncan; if you love me send for my mother. I'll be guided by her advice. Her 'Yes' shall be my 'Yes,' and"—she hesitated, and I, pressing her to my heart, finished the sentence for her with, "Her 'No' shall be your 'No,' my Marjorie."

"Confound her mother," I thought. "She'll see her mother only as my wife."

I begged her to rest awhile, saying that I would further interview old Dad, and, if necessary, would send for her mother. This appeased her.

She went to her room to rest, or to weep. The latter would benefit her most, as it would most quickly wear her out and crush her spirits. I locked the door, put the landlady on guard, and went down to Dad, who walked with me on the highway.

"Well, Bluey," he said, giving me a serious look, "you are making a pretty hash of this business. Do you know where it will all land you? The old woman has taken to her bed."

"Pity she didn't take to drink," I suggested.

"And, what is more, she has wired for her eldest son, the religious chap, to come at once. Last night she got a telegram that he would start at once, and, if necessary, employ the service of the secret police. So, to-morrow or the next day you'll be 'pinched,' and the game will be up. Are you married yet?" he demanded.

I shook my head.

"And never will be," he replied, mockingly.

The news of the brother's coming alarmed me. The ropes were being drawn tightly about me. I must act—and at once.

"Dad!" I said hastily, "Go back, at once, and send Marjorie this telegram (handing him a paper). Marjorie must get it to-night. Then go to some obscure chemist, and get me a dram of this" (putting into his hand a recipe for a powerful drug, the merits of which I had often tested).

"I don't like using drugs, Bluey," Dad protested. "Keep off drugs old man. The use of them always adds five years to the ordinary terms, and I am too old to be 'pinched.'"

"To Heligoland with your croaking" I exclaimed in anger. "You must either be in or out of this job. The girl loves me, and, in case of a struggle with her people, will stick to me before all, once we are married."

Dad nodded.

"Then tell the old woman a tale. Anything you like. Assure her all is well. Get back to me with that drug before 10 o'clock to-night. Yes, to-night. All will hang on to-night's work. Here comes my servant."

"Bluey," interposed old Dad. "Your servant said to me, 'The Boss has a nice game on, but where do we come in, if he expects me to "carry the baby" for nix he'll find himself up the wrong peach-tree.'"

Dad's remarks struck home, but I did not reply, because the fellow was at my heels.

I smiled at him, and said, "Here, have a cigar. I am going to trust you with a serious piece of business. I know you are honest and straight."

He winked a little. Dad opened his mouth a lot.

"I'll pay you well for all you do for me, and," I added as I saw his smile, "when your work is finished you'll get your pay."

The fellow looked serious.

"A five thousand dollar bill is nothing to me," I continued. "Nothing—gold is dirt, dross, only to be thrown away for services properly rendered. I trust you!" I exclaimed with well-assumed emotion. "Yes, I trust you. Take that gentleman back to the hotel. Be silent as to all your movements and all my plans and actions. Once you land our friend at the hotel, seek out some poorly-paid puny parson whom Providence continually frowns upon. Sound him, from afar off at first. Tell him a story of a runaway love match, and a couple who wish to be tied together in the holy bonds of wedlock. If he brings the necessary papers and ties the knot he can have gold to feed his hungry children—if he has any—or appease his boisterous creditors. And whisper to him that he will be doing a blessed act in furthering the happiness of the lovers. Tell him anything but the truth, and bring him along to-night."

"To-night!"

"Yes, to-night. If I am not quite ready for him, he can lodge at the inn until morning. You understand your business."

The servant nodded, and, smiling cunningly, said "I was just made for the job."

"Well," I replied, "get ready. Bring the car along and pick my friend up here."

Dad and I walked on. Dad was very thoughtful and remarked, "I don't like that fellow, Bluey. He'll turn dog and squeak. Then, suddenly remembering something, Dad blurted out, "Oh! Bluey, I have a letter. I nearly forgot to show you. It's from that

young imp of the inferno, Weary Willie. He is nasty, very nasty; he winds up his letter thus:—‘I went to Father Abraham for a quid, and got thrown into the street instead. I mean business. Tell him, Bluey, plainly, if he wants to turn respectable and marry that American girl with all the money, he had better square his debts first. Hoping you are well in the game, your faithful friend, WEARY WILLIE.’”

This was a new development. I was now sorry I did not strangle the brat before he left the hotel.

“What did you do?” I asked Dad,

“Oh, I sent him a fiver and told him you had gone to Johannesburg, but I would write to you.”

“If ever I get my hands on his throat,” I said viciously, “I’ll never let go until I squeeze the breath out of his shrivelled body.”

At that moment the car came flying towards us. Dad went over his instructions, mounted, and when the car had started I strolled back to the hotel. Marjorie was sleeping peacefully. I went to my room to rest and to think—and I feel asleep. When I awoke the sun had hidden his head in the far west, as though ashamed of man’s treachery.

A gentle rap at my door. “Tea is ready, Sir. A telegram for my young lady.”

I closed the door again. The telegram ran:—

Be guarded by your own heart. Return soon. I am well.
Fondest love.—MOTHER.

I went into the dining-room, where the lights were flickering with the wind, and told the hag to give this telegram to Marjorie and tell her that I was waiting tea for her.

Marjorie came from her room, pale and listless. The telegram was in her hand. She mechanically handed it to me and took her place at the table. I

kissed her and chaffed her with a false laugh. I was getting done up, and desperate. I saw, in my mind's eye, her brother coming to her assistance and my disgrace—perhaps ruin. The image of Weary Willie also haunted me. And on top of all my trouble Marjorie appeared to me to be getting ill. If she were to collapse, my house of cards would tumble about my ears and all would be lost, myself included. For, in our business, once the tide turns it brings a flood that submerges all in its mad course. Marjorie sipped her tea, which I had laced with brandy. She ate nothing. Once or twice she laughed hysterically. At last, I assisted her to her sitting-room and seated her on a large old-fashioned hospitable couch, wrapped a comfortable rug about her, and petted her until I got fairly knocked out with the work.

So the time sped, until the old rusty village clock croaked out the hour of ten. I was commencing to get peevish, and began to wonder if Dad and my servant had broken their necks. At times I fancied they had been arrested. At intervals I could have sworn that I heard Marjorie's mother's voice in the corridor below. The brandy fired my blood and quickened my imagination. Marjorie dozed in a listless fashion on the sofa. At last the noise of the motor-car reached my ears. I hastened to the outer stair landing. Old Dad greeted me with a grin. He was half drunk. He was followed by the parson, a seedy, hungry-looking German, of the Lutheran tribe, who peered at me, with blurred eyes, through large old-fashioned spectacles. His beard and hair were unkempt and his coat greasy and green with age. He profusely replied in broken English to my greetings and apologies for troubling him so much.

"Is all ready?" he enquired.

As all was not ready, or nearly ready, I begged that the holy rite should be deferred until the next morning. The lady was tired and somewhat indisposed, I explained.

The Gospel-vendor acquiesced, rather grumpily.

Dad came to the rescue, with, "We'll leave love's young dream alone and make ourselves happy over a bottle or two below. Have a scratch banquet and be spick and span for the morning. Come, reverend Sir; we'll shake the landlord up!"

They departed; but Dad returned to give me the packet containing the drug. "Be careful, Bluey," he said. "The clouds are gathering. The old woman is in bed in a high state of fever. She raves for her daughter, louder than ever Shylock raved for his kid. I'll fix the parson up. He has all the papers ready."

The hour of eleven now struck. Marjorie was still dosing. When she awoke I induced her to take a glass of champagne. After a long pause, she said slowly, "When do we return to mother, Duncan?"

"To-morrow, my love, after we are man and wife," I replied.

She clung to me in a feverish state of mind. Her tears seemed to have taken a holiday, but there was a look in her pale smooth face I did not like. If she were to die before marriage? What fearful consequences the bare thought conjured up! I sat on a stool by her side, holding her hot hand. She seemed to wander in her speech, and a sob now and again escaped her. I almost pitied her sad plight. Still she must not escape me. She must be my wife. My wife. The very whispering of that term sounded like a hollow mockery of the sacred word, "wife."

The clock struck twelve. I gently left the room,

had a nip or two of brandy, and with hands almost trembling unfolded the white paper containing the drug. It had written on it "One dose at bed-time." Dissolving this in champagne I awoke Marjorie from her half slumber, half doze, held her in my arms, and coaxed her to drink it. "All?" "Yes, all." She did, smiled, and rested her head on my arm. I begged her to sit up and talk to me before she retired for the night. She embraced me, saying, "Oh! Duncan, Duncan, I love you. Am I yours only? Will you always love me? I am a silly girl, not good enough for you. You'll soon tire of me. What shall I do, Duncan, when your love is lost to me?" Her eyes danced vivaciously. She seemed to become animated, and clung to me as her only hope, her rock of safety.

Poor child! A pigeon in the clutch of a hawk would be an adequate simile. I turned the light down and enfolded her in my arms, swearing by the past and the future never to desert her if she would marry me. Her mother's consent had been obtained. Why, then, not marry me and return to her mother, full of happiness. I pleaded as man seldom pleads. At last, as the clock struck two, she consented. She would be my wife. As she uttered the fatal word the noise grew louder in the room below. The party, the wedding party, were making merry, and the landlord was reaping the harvest.

At four o'clock I left Marjorie asleep. She seemed to be happy at last. I had a "nip" and sought out my servant, who had retired early to think out, probably, how he could best blackmail or destroy me. I gave him strict instructions what to do at daylight. I then sought out Dad, but he was snoring like a well-fed pig. Returning to my room I prepared several accounts, placed my papers in order, nipped at the

brandy again, and gathered my thoughts together for the morning's action. Marjorie seemed now to be well within my grasp, my talons had grasped her pretty tightly. She could not go back—not, not go back.

The sun rose in its grandeur. The old woman came in to straighten up, and went to Marjorie's room, to find her resting on her bed fully dressed with a rug thrown over her.

"Awaken your mistress; tell her the motor-car is ready for her," I said.

After a time, and I think a struggle, she managed to get Marjorie to understand that she was to go home in a motor-car. When Marjorie came into the sitting-room, her face was deadly pale; her features haggard; her eyes bold and bloodshot. She seemed as one bereft of her senses. I clasped her in my arms, and ordered the old dame to get me some champagne. This Marjorie greedily drank. She looked about, wildly, enquiring where she was; what she was doing here? "You are, Duncan," she said, "Where is my mother?" Then she seemed to be thinking—thinking hard. The cold perspiration came from her brow. What if her reason was impaired! What if she were now mad! All my hopes seemed shattered by the thought. She was certainly dizzy, silly, and wandering in her mind. I gave her another glass of champagne. It revived her a little. I told the old woman to tell my servant to bring the company up at once.

"Now, my Marjorie, are you to be my wife."

She did not answer.

"When," I pleaded, "the holy parson asks you whether you will be my wife, say 'Yes'—only Yes'?"

She nodded.

"And then," I said vehemently, "sign your name?"

She again nodded.

"Then we'll go to your mother."

She looked at me full in the face—a half-wild glare.

"When he asks you, say 'Yes.' You know, Marjorie?"

She nodded.

The company trooped into the room, Dad leading the way. The parson followed, and my servant brought up the rear. Marjorie looked strangely, first at one, then at another. She half smiled at old Dad, who gave a little low whistle at the sight of her. My servant seemed staggered. All the documents had been previously prepared. All was ready. The parson, acting strictly on instructions, put the question: "Do you take this man for your wedded husband?"

Marjorie hesitated. She was confused. He put the question again: "Do you take this man for your wedded husband?"

Still no answer. Dad looked at me. My servant glared at me. It was a look of triumph. At least I thought so. The parson was the only imperturbed person in the wedding group. He cleared his throat, stepped closer and put the question once more.

"Say 'Yes,' my love! Marjorie, say 'Yes.'" I whispered.

She hesitated a moment—only a moment—and then said "Yes."

A sigh of relief came over all present, my Yankee servant possibly excepted.

"Good!" said the parson. "Now, please, sign your name there! Just there! Along that line. There!"

We all held our breath, and Marjorie took the pen and gave a wild look at me.

"There love!" I murmured. "Just there."

Slowly she commenced to sign—then stopped. I urged her on.

She signed—She was now mine—My wife—My wife!

The witnesses and parson signed mechanically. I had already signed. The company were about to depart when Marjorie nervously clung to me. I hurriedly assisted her to her room. When she saw her clothes and other familiar articles she gave one hysterical screech that rang through the building and pierced every corner of the tumble-down place.

The old woman soon put Marjorie to bed and I joined the bridal party in the outer room. Champagne was uncorked and congratulations followed. My faithful servant drank much wine, but offered no congratulations. I paid the parson a heavy fee and bade him rest for awhile.

I was now a married man! My better half was on the verge of insanity, but her dollars would not drive my brain-box off its hinges. What if she were to die in this new fit, or become divorced or separated? I sent for the parson, explained, with many sobs in my voice, my helpless position, and asked his holy advice at a 50-guinea fee. He, good easy man, soon understood the position. Celebrating marriages, giving birth certificates, and burying the dead were the chief items in his business, but he also understood the art of will making. Nothing was easier.

"Go!" he said, with a wink, "and comfort your wife. I'll draw her will and testament in your favour solely, together with a settlement, and all will be ready by lunch time."

I obeyed him and went to my wife's room. She was sleeping. I sat beside her and was now happy,

happy after my manner of happiness, but, alas! my spell of matrimonial bliss was soon broken. A telegram was handed me by the old dame from Marjorie's ma (the real article this time). It read thus:—

My beloved child, be brave. Resist all the temptations of that viper. I am ill. Your brother will arrive at 3 p.m. to-day, and motor immediately to your rescue.—Your broken-hearted mother.

It was now evident that his Satanic Majesty was determined not to grant me repose, or even respite, for one day, to enjoy my matrimonial bliss. I sprang from the bridal couch to prepare for the coming attack. It was now 9 o'clock. Her brother could not be here before 4 p.m. Marjorie must sleep until 12 o'clock.

I carefully looked over the will and deed the reverend gentleman had drawn up. It gave me all; made me sole executor. Now to get it signed and witnessed. My Yankee servant must not be in this new move. He was commencing to trouble me already. But I must take him with me on my honeymoon tour. To leave him behind would be to give Marjorie's brother powder and shot to fire after me. I had been more than kind; now I would try bounce on him. I ordered everything to be ready to depart at one o'clock. The Yankee half demurred at this sudden removal. He appeared sulky. So I approached him kindly and enquired if he was prepared to continue to faithfully follow my affairs."

"Well, Boss," he boldly asserted, "It's a matter of dollars with me. I am not out for the good of others all the time. I want to know where I come in in this scrimmage. What's my whack?"

"What do you expect?" I inquired.

"Well, all your work seems to be risky, Boss. How would \$6,000 suit your palate."

I smiled and said, off-handedly, "You'll get \$10,000 when the game is fairly won."

"That's me, all the time and every time," he remarked. "Killing snakes would only be a circumstance to how I'll work for you if you pay up handsomely and promptly."

"I never doubted your loyalty or ability," I said.

"Well, don't doubt my memory either, Boss," he added smiling.

Old Dad and the Parson were confidentially "nipping" at the brandy bottle in the tap-room when I went there to tell them to be ready for the signing of the will and settlement deed. I returned to Marjorie's room. She was still asleep. I awakened her, and, after much coaxing, I induced her to take some coffee and cognac. The old dame, with the assistance of the landlord's big fat German daughter, dressed her. A stupid vacant look was in her eyes and she did everything mechanically.

When all was ready, the Parson and Dad entered the chamber with the will and settlement deed, which Marjorie signed where directed, after which I led, in fact almost carried, her to the motor-car.

The luggage, including the opossum rug containing the hidden jewels, was on board. Marjorie literally fell back in her wraps. Death seemed to speak out of her very features.

I was about to give the word to proceed when Dad whispered, "Bluey, old man, so sure as the sun will set to-night your wife is mad. Yes, these troubles have turned her brain. You've married a mad woman. Her will and marriage settlement will be contested, and you will be lost. Only her life and full return to sanity will hold you. Remember, Bluey, her death destroys you. So let this be your card—look after

her. Further treachery to that poor child will bring destruction on your head. God bless her, poor child, says I every time. Yes, Bluey, all the time."

Tears were in his big kind eyes and his fat face worked with emotion. I pressed his hand and motioned to the driver to proceed.

"To the hotel?" he inquired.

"No," I said hoarsely, "across the frontier to Paris."

The motor started, and we were soon whirling along the highway *en route* for Paris. Marjorie was almost lifeless in my arms. Dad's warning was running in my ears. My thoughts revolved quicker than the motor wheels revolved on the hard road. It was a flight with an heiress—No, with a mad wife—Yes, yes, you gods of fate, with a mad wife—a mad wife.

On, on, we sped, leaving miles and miles of dust-covered road behind us, Marjorie showing hardly any signs of life. Thus we travelled for nearly five hours, with occasional stops for hurried refreshments. The sun was setting when we approached a quiet rustic village, about 15 leagues from Paris. Here we found a quiet homely hotel. I engaged the best suite of rooms obtainable. The landlord's wife, a homely, if somewhat portly dame, gave quite motherly care to Marjorie, who had to be carried out of the motor-car and put to bed. The landlady advised medical aid, which was obtained, and I awaited the verdict from the sick room.

The doctor shook his head gravely, and another doctor was sent for. The serious pained look on the landlady's face spoke ill-tidings. Would Marjorie die? Dad's warning came back to me a thousand times. The second doctor arrived, and the consultation between the two lasted some time. At last they emerged

from the sick room, speaking earnestly in low guarded tones.

"You are Mr. St. Clair?" said one of the doctors.

"Yes, doctor. How is my wife?"

"Well," began the first medical man, "your wife has received a severe shock. All her nerves are unstrung, and she is at the moment quite irrational—insane."

I hid my face in my hands, for form's sake.

The doctor sympathetically placed his hand on my shoulder and said, "Bear up, old chap. You must be a man, and fight for your dear wife's life."

I silently pressed his extended hand.

"You must have two nurses—one for the night, another for the day. The greatest care must be observed. You had better keep away from her for at least the first week. No doubt your presence would excite her. I'll fully instruct the landlady. I will see her again, to-night, and will send the nurses. Good night, Mr. St. Clair."

The doctor stopped, hesitated, and then, eyeing me said, "Has your wife taken any drugs, sedative drugs, during the last 24 hours?"

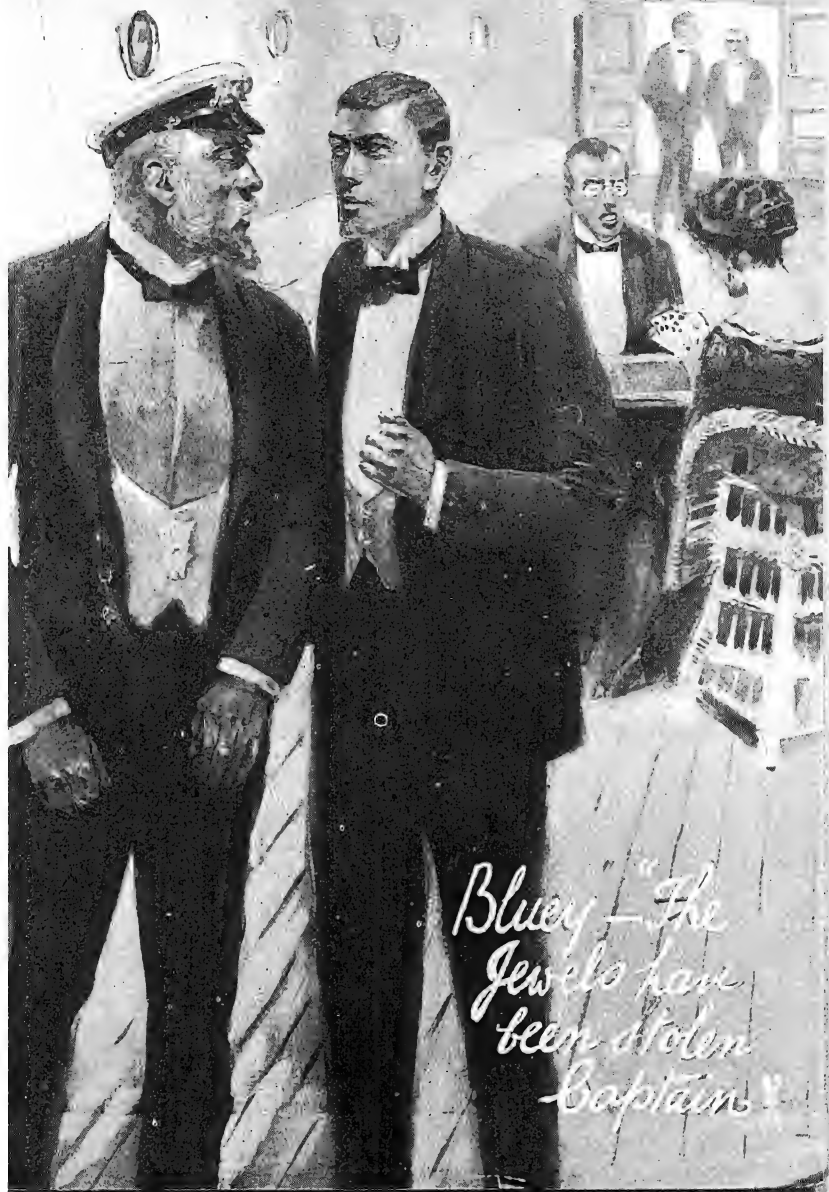
"No, doctor," I said shaking my head.

"Well, good night," he said. "We both wish that good fortune may attend you and your young wife."

So, my wife was mad! Dad's words were coming true. My chickens of fraud were coming home to roost with a vengeance. I had one peep at her. She was sleeping, but pale, pale as her smock.

That evening I wrote to Roderick Gympie, enclosing the will and settlement deed, and asking him to act on my behalf at once, and wire Marjorie's trustees to do all things at once as my wife—hollow words—was very ill. I reflected on the game I had played.

It had been a tough job; I would not undertake it again for twice Marjorie's fortune. No, I would go to work, first. Then I tumbled into bed, at war with myself and the world generally.



*Bluey - "The
Jewels have
been stolen
Captain!"*

CHAPTER XXXIII.—FATHER ABRAHAM'S ADVICE.

TEN days had passed since I landed in the rustic French village with my insane wife, who was still in a comatose state. The doctors were puzzled about her condition. The position was commencing to pall upon me. I knew from Dad that a hunt was being made for Marjorie by her relatives. My American servant was growing restive, bold, and impertinent. To keep him unemployed might mean ruin, so I decided to send him to Father Abraham on a mission—anything to get him out of my sight. I wrote to Father Abraham telling him how to act with the fellow, and what to expect from me by way of a “sweet present”—this was our pass word.

I handed my servant an “open” letter, addressed to Father Abraham, in which I spoke of the bearer’s brain power, loyalty, goodness, etc., and I added that during the next few weeks I would owe the bearer 10,000 francs, on account of which sum he might be advanced as desired. The Yankee smartie chuckled in triumph over the letter, but I mentally vowed that he would never handle one franc of the 10,000 if I could help it.

A few days later I was in London, sitting comfortably in the hospitable arm-chair in Father Abraham’s private office, with one of his best cigars between my lips. He told me that my Yankee servant had duly delivered the sweetmeats (and the jewels), but had since got into trouble and had been sent to a place from which he was not likely to return.

After we had shared the spoils of the hotel-stolen jewellery, which the Yankee had brought over in the sweetmeat box, I partly unfolded my plans. Having paced the floor for some time, the old man stopped short and seriously exclaimed, "Bluey, you are mad. Yes, stark, staring mad, to think of quitting de game now dat you are on de top. You have, my boy, been through all de drudgery. You have passed through de fierce fire of experience, and now dat your efforts have been crowned v'd success you vant to go and hide in some out of de way place to fret in obscurity, to grow rusty, take to drink, and finally blow your brains out. No, no, my boy. You're on top now. Stay dere. Remember, millionaires graduate as you have done my boy. Their beginnings start wid little shady tricks. Stolen diamonds—crooked mines. Your's started wid cards and loaded dice, all de time and every time."

"Now you're behind money, you can push your vay along or get others to push you. Become a director of, say, an alleged diamond field in Timbuc-too; de diamonds are not necessary for its success. Buy a seat in de Stock Exchange—load and unload as Australian Bushrangers did in de old days. Only do it like a gentleman—always be a gentleman—not like a nasty beastly robber who vants your money or your life. You only vant your client's money, not his life. The poor-house, and the pauper's grave can have vat's left. Once a director of a fabulous gold belt, this vill enable you to belt de gold out of vat yóu Australians call de mugs. Ha, ha, ha, de mugs is good, very good.

"Den, Bluey, buy race-horses. Vy not? Run em dead until you stiffen de public. Den empty out on dem and scoop de pool. Ha! ha! ha! It's goot! It's

grand! And who knows but you vil enter Parliament to save—well, de brewers, de brokers, and de young tieves, who have grown old in tieving. You vas become a leader of men of your own class in de crook stakes, and vat an opportunity exists here in dis glorious land of freedhom ver every man is free to rob his broder if he does it in de orthodox fashion and like a yentleman. Oh! do be a yentleman, Bluey—I hate de common persons.

“Remember dis, my dear boy, vonce you sit behind vat you call de ‘splosh’ de Society vill protect you, and Society is de law of de land. De ignorant mob rave at de yentleman who corners veat and pockets de pennies of de poor, but de mob forget. Vat, don’t you know? Joseph, of our holt tribe, vas von of de first corners of corn. Ven he had cornered all de corn he could corner, and de bad times came upon de land of our blessed faders, Joseph visely turned de corner by turning de cornered corn into coin, and he vas blessed for his cornering, and now has a corner and crown and de harp all to himself in dat land far away where your congregations never vill break up and de Sabbath never ends.”

“But,” I argued, “although I’ve been successful, it’s he who takes the pitcher to the well too often who is the fool.”

“Quite right, quite right, Bluey, but all de pitchers you see going to de vells now vas cracked crockery. Your pitcher, my poy, vas ironbound and vid care vill last for years. Do you know, Bluey, de vay you are going on giving de game up is simply flying in de face of de devil. I vas ashamed of you, vantage to trow de towel in de ring before you received von punch. Remember, my dear Bluey, our blessed Fader Moses gave de ten commandments to de mob dat do

no vork, and he only kept de eleventh for himself, which, being interpreted, said, 'Get in early and unload early, for its de early cat dat catches de late rat.'

"De first step, Bluey, is to get into Society: announce your marriage in de society papers—it's 5s. a line, but it's dirt cheap at de price, dirt cheap. Vonce your million is advertised in de papers, broken down swells and impecubious titled dames vil be treading upon each others heels to introduce you into Society. Use them as a ladder to climb; den boot de mavay. Money, money, my poy, can do vonders, and de only vonder in de whole business is vat it can't do. Yes, vat it can't do."

The old man dry-washed his hands, and continued: "You must join clubs. You must give garden parties. You must entertain. De table and de vine and de veek-end parties are all valuable pawns in de game of grab and hold. I have a hundred or more fine ladies on my books who I vill instruct to help you into Society's nest, and vonce you get dere, my poy, de rook among de pigeon's nest vill be nothing to it. Ha! ha! ha! It's grand, grand!"

"But first get your wife back to health. Take her for a sea trip, load her wid jewels, pearls, diamonds, emeralds, and other precious stones. Vell advertise de presents in society's papers. Den insure de precious jewels for, say, £40,000. Lose de lot on de voyage and as dey vill only be paste and crook gems, de profit vill be fabulous and pay de expenses of de trip ten times over. Who vill dare impute your honesty over de lost jewels, vitch my book will show were bought from my respectable house and by such a rich man as you, Bluey. No insurance company vill dare do it. If dey did, all der capital vould be swallowed up in damages at law.

"Oh! my boy, my boy, I see visions of millions. Crook vins, tired race-horses, bogus companies, and corners. Bluey, your hour has come, it's here knocking at de door. Vhy! You will make a million clear if you'll only vork vid me. Get back to your wife. I'll see after de Society papers. I'll fix up de crook jewels; descriptions of dem vill appear in de papers, and all vill be ready. If you can, go vithin a month. You know I love you, my boy. You are clever, very clever, but remember Old Father Abraham taught you. Yes, remember de old man taught you. You are my best pupil. I love all de Australians." And he laughed heartily as he slapped me good-naturedly on the back.

As the clouds were gathering thick and fast, and Marjorie's brother was on a walking tour for me, I thought it safest to take my bride to Africa. It was a case of depart, or stop and be trapped.

I quickly decided. I sent Dad to square the doctors with tales of Marjorie's home and mother in dear Australia, the sea voyage, change of scene, old faces, etc., to revive sweet memories in her soul that might gradually restore her to healthful reason.

The boat cast her moorings and we were soon full steam ahead for Durban, South Africa. For some days Marjorie hardly appeared conscious or sane, notwithstanding the fresh air—she spent hours upon hours on deck—and my unremitting attention. I was never from her side. As the days and days passed, her reason gradually returned. She then walked the deck with me, laughed, and became more and more rational in her conversation. And I became happy in her company and nursed her like a lonely child.

CHAPTER XXXIV.—A SON BORN TO BLUEY.

It was night-time when we cast anchor off Durban, close to that mighty breakwater built primarily with the blood and the tears and the curses of many thousands of our black brothers and quite a number of our own kith and kin. The lights of the beautiful breirer—the hills of Durban—were then dancing like fairy lamps in the distance.

I now proposed to take my £40,000 worth of fully-insured jewels from the ship's strong room.

The purser, the first officer, and I were in attendance, and the safe was opened. Alas! the jewels were gone—simply vanished.

I hurried to the promenade deck, where I met the captain quietly smoking his after-dinner cigar: I said, "The jewels have been stolen, Captain!"

The good old chap—a real chip of the splendid old British block—was staggered. So was everybody else on board, and much sympathy was extended to my wife and myself—naturally, none to the insurance company.

After the usual fuss—the screech in the papers—the police looking for the thief, and still looking—the necessary papers were signed by the dear old captain, and so enabled Father Abraham to "touch" the till of the insurance company for a mighty round sum, which paid expenses and left a handsome margin.

Of course, I had bagged the jewels—or, to be correct, crook jewels—on the voyage, while the purser,

who was a great spar-er for booze, was snoozing off the biggest booze he had had for a year—of course, at my expense. I “pinched” the safe keys, secured the paste diamonds, returned the keys, and consigned the false gems from Bluey Grey to the bluey ocean.

Landing at Durban, we put up at a quiet hotel on the beautiful breirer. Marjorie and I rested, with love as our only companion. Thus, one month glided away and gave birth to another. It was a joyous time for me as I sat in that heaven-favoured spot watching my wife, whose condition daily became more interesting. I swear to you that in those days—so blissfully passed—a new life was being born in me—Yes, I felt instinctively that I should be better and cut, for ever, my old ways of living.

At last! At last! The event arrived—my son was born.

It was then that I spent the only two years of my life worth living. The joy of my son transported me, and often made me curse the fates that registered me in the book of life as Bluey Grey, the thief.

Soon after Dad returned from England we all invaded Johannesburg. Dad and The Swell were in charge of the horses. They had won three small events after running dead a dozen times. The big races of the year at Johannesburg were at hand. The interest was at fever heat. Money was plentiful and brains at a strong marketable premium.

CHAPTER XXXV.—THE PAINTED HORSE AT JOHANNESBURG.

It was the eve of the first day of the Johannesburg meeting. We had Columbus, who was really Fly-the-Garter in disguise, that is "no paint." I had instructed The Swell to throw the real Columbus overboard and bring on Fly-the-Garter as Columbus, the maiden. But he was too tired to take on throwing horses overboard; so he brought the two on to Johannesburg.

At an outside meeting, about a week before, he raced the real Columbus, who was very like Fly-the-Garter but for some white spots under the flank and on the saddle flaps. Columbus ran last in a poor field. Now Fly-the-Garter, with his white spots dyed, was racing in a semi-classical race as Columbus, the beaten horse. After the exhibition the real Columbus made of himself one week back, it seemed a chapter from high hysteria to race him in a classical race at the Premier Club's meeting. However, The Swell knew everything, and he and Dad got the horse Fly-the-Garter dyed so as to appear the exact counterfeit of the crook Columbus, and entered him for the first race of the day. The saddling bell had gone, and the horse was being saddled up. So well had he been dyed that he almost deceived me.

The bookie yelled "10 to 1 bar three, any price outsider, 50 to 1 Columbus." "Well, here," fairly screeched one lean and highly consumptive-looking member of the chosen tribe, "I'll lay 100 to 1 Colum-

bus or 50 to 1 that he'll finish last, or 25 to 1 he'll fall and break his neck. Who'll take it? Who'll take it?"

I placed two tenners into his sweaty hand saying, "2,000 to 20; I'll make a cash bet."

After that I fairly poured the tenners on at 100 to 1, 50 to 1, 30 to 1, 20 to 1. I had 800 on painted Fly-the-Garter. He was a dead ring for the crook Columbus—they were balmy, like two peas in a pod.

Fly-the-Garter could carry the fattest bookie in the ring, and beat the present field, or be home and dried before the field got on to its legs. He could eat his opponents. If he couldn't, well, I'd go to work.

So much money came from what they call the right quarter for the supposed Columbus that he hardened in the market to 10's and to 8's, and the stewards opened their eyes and kept the flaps of their ears well back. They were not in this joke—that's a cert.

The Melbourne trainer, Dope-ton, who first saw me in the club, came to Columbus' stall, minutely examined the horse, critically eyed all that was going on, and then strolled off to the stewards' enclosure. The stewards came around, one after another, while Fly-the-Garter pranced, pawed, frothed from the mouth, and sweated profusely. I felt wet. Instinctively, I felt something was in the wind. That Australian battler, was a nark. He wanted South Africa to himself. I could swear he knew I was Bluey Grey. He repulsed all my friendly advances. I felt sure he was waiting for me with his usual sandbag.

Still, Fly-the-Garter must win, and I must win a fortune. Nothing could stop it—if he only stood up. The air seemed charged with whispers of something being crook.

The crowd was enormous; the excitement intense,

and the horses were at the post. At last the starter sent the field away to a good start. Before they had gone 50 yards Fly-the-Garter was in front. He increased his lead. On, on he came. It was no race. He won by 100 yards, foaming from body and mouth. He was weighed in O.K. The weight flag was hoisted. The crowd was silent and sullen. I commenced to collect. Confound my luck! Had I only remained with the horse all would have been well. I had collected about £6,000 and went on the hunt for the consumptive bookie who laid me 2,000 to 20.

A murmur of a 100 voices from the horse's box came along with the ill wind that was gathering force. A great crowd had assembled around Columbus. The murmur grew into a tumultuous roar. I stood petrified. The consumptive cove with whom I had bet—he stood to lose 2,000 to me—came running and yelling as he ran, "It's dyed! It's dyed! Don't pay out! Don't pay out! It's a swindle—a robbery! Don't pay out! Oh! my lor, it's dyed! Look! Look! The dye is on my 'ands. Don't pay out. Stewards! Stewards! Vere is de stewards? Are British subjects to be robbed in open day ven de sun is shining? It's a nice country! why where are de stewards? Vill somebody got busy go for the stewards! Are ve only on British soil to pay taxes? Ve get more Justice in Jerushulam. Oh Fader Moses vere is de stewards—stewards?"

So he yelled. The mob who had lost their brains and their money took up the cry. The horse was surrounded. The Swell was hustled, and hooted, and hissed at. Cries of "Go back to Australia" were hurled at The Swell, who, forsooth, had never seen that beloved land.

Just as I reached the horse Major Bendly was soiling his tight-fitting kid gloves with the dye colour

that was oozing from the hide of the horse, and mingling with the sweat copiously pouring from the pores. The foam on the horse was not white; it was of a dirty-brown, yellowish colour. The gallant major ordered the people to stand back. Would he had stood them on their heads! My friend, Dopeton, examined the dye; smelt it; and, I thought, was about to taste it. "It's dye, sure enough. It's quite an old practice amongst the 'spielers' in Australia," he sneered, and, eyeing me, whispered into my ear, "Isn't it, Mr. Bluey Grey?"

"Dog! Dog!" I savagely ejaculated.

The stewards now came in force. The horse, its saddle, and all its accoutrements were seized, and I was asked to go to the Committee room.

"Do you own that horse?" was the first question put to me.

"No! I don't" was my cast-iron reply.

"He's run in your name!" someone suggested.

"He is not my horse," I repeated. "There's my address. My solicitors will communicate with you." Good old bluff!

Thereupon I left the room. It was my only get out. Pure bluff, or fall in—and heavily in, at that.

As I left the course the mob hooted me, shouting, "Painter and glazier," "A new artist come to town," "A painter of 'orses." Mobs are like mongrels, they bark loudest and strongest in safe numbers.

I returned to Marjorie and my son, and drew them close to me now that the whirlwind of affairs of time were going against me. My boy prattled to me about the races, the gee-gees, and said he was going to be a policeman when he was a big man.

Marjorie handed me two letters, which had just arrived by the English mail. One was from Roderick

Gympie, informing me that in regard to our marriage, Marjorie's relations were contesting the validity of her father's settlement on her, her deed of settlement on me, and her will in my favour. The parson who had married us had turned "dog" and was in their pay. The defence of this action would necessitate Marjorie's going into the witness box, and, what was more serious, of my doing likewise. My full character was in their hands. "So," thought I, "they will have light reading enough, and to spare."

Roderick Gympie—who had risen to eminence in his profession—also told me of the Countess' release and her demand for the card I gave him to give to her, and upon which I wrote something after her conviction. He also stated that the Countess had joined the women suffragists and now talked from platforms, denouncing all men as liars, thieves, and what not. She seemed mad on two things—getting the vote for women and putting my light out. She was a desperate she-wolf. If we ever met, the struggle would be short and sharp. I would take no chances with her.

The other letter was from Father Abraham—full of misery. His luck was out. Nothing seemed to go right with him. He had had serious losses and wished I were once more in London to help him.

Just as I was going to dinner a note was put into my hands stating that an investigation by the Jockey Club into the running of the alleged Columbus would be held at the Club rooms the day following the races, and requesting me to be present and in the meantime not to seek admittance to the Club grounds, as my name was on the gate for non-admittance until the investigation was concluded.

"Warned off!" I whispered to myself. "Yes,

warned off! Warned off!" still rang in my ears. "Warned off!" clung to my imagination through dinner. All eyes in the dining room were turned on me. All gazed at me. All jeered or joked at me. Some rudely pointed me out. The clatter and the chatter of the adjoining table in the fashionable swell feeding room was all in reference to the episode of the day. The racing of the dyed horse. But for that outrage, each of them would have won something. Some of the remarks of the refined members of Society were brutal in their bluntness. One lady, whose husband had left his country for his country's good, and had succeeded in making a fortune in the land of the Kaffir by fraud and blackmail, remarked, quite audibly, "Columbus' owner must be a regular Michael Angelo." At this there were loud giggles.

"Oh! no," replied her guest, a feather-bed soldier of the kid-glove and cosmetic moustache type, "Michael Angelo never painted horses; he painted things. We now find things painting horses."

"Warned off!" I could not get rid of the words. Thank heaven, my wife was ignorant of the meaning of the terrible sentence, "Warned off."

After dinner I strolled into the billiard room. Dopeton was there. The topic of conversation seemed to be the "painting episode."

"It's a 'breakwater job' (criminal)," said one.

"Yes," remarked another, "if proven, we'll have 'Michael Angelo' working on the 'national job.'"

I left the room, full of misery and resolve. "Bluey," I said, "if you fail in this, you are fit meat for mongrels. Shake yourself up! Think of old times! Think of the hot and strong jobs you have pulled through! Be a man, a tradesman at

the game." I threw away my cigar; had a brandy and soda; and sent for The Swell.

When he came, I asked, "Where have they got the horse?"

"Well guarded in Galgean's stables," he replied. "Two men are looking after him. No one is to approach the box. They want the horse intact for investigation to-morrow or the next day."

"Do you know the men who are watching him?"

"No."

"Do you know where Sunny Sam and Fattie are?"

Sunny Sam was the individual who dyed Fly-the-Garter as Columbus.

"I saw them for a moment on the course," said The Swell. "They won a good pouch full on the painted beauty and collected."

"Can you find them?"

"Yes; I'll have them here in half an hour."

"Not here, but two miles from here, on the western road, at that culvert where we arranged matters before. Go; and return and tell me if they will be punctual."

Then I went back to my wife and son. I was like a lost sheep. The Swell soon came back to tell me that the two men would be in waiting for me.

When my wife went to put my son to bed, I suggested that she go to bed also, as I had important work to do. She complied, and I sent The Swell to get two horses fully saddled and await me on the outskirts of the town at a given spot. I donned old clothes, a long dark rain coat, and a cap over my goggled eyes; then, turning out the lights, made my exit by the servants' back stairs. I found the spot where The Swell was awaiting me. We were soon

with Sunny Sam and Fattie, and held our conference on the open veldt.

The plan of attack was agreed to. Sunny Sam was a hottie of the hotties. He would take a risk. I had in the old days helped him with a friendly *alibi* that saved him doing "a stretch." I was always silverish to the mob, but Sunny Sam dragged gold out of me. He was daring, and clever, and solid.

Sunny Sam and Fattie were to chat the watch on the horse and to appear half drunk. Two bottles of whisky were to be the only "ammunition" used. One bottle was to be drugged.

When we returned to town, I prepared the whisky. My mate waited for The Swell's coming, received the drugged spirits, and then made off—very much under the "influence." For a time they argued and talked horses with the two watchers. One did not drink; the other drank freely out of the bottle not drugged. The Swell and I were watching in hiding. One o'clock struck. Still they talked. They talked about the man who trained Carbine; the bloke who could pick up a three-penny bit with a stock whip; the kangaroo who could box Johnson; and how the Melbourne Cup was lost.

At last the watcher who did not drink went to have a snooze in a shed close by. I think he had a revolver. He was soon asleep. The other was getting drunk. Sunny Sam gave him a dose from the drugged bottle and he, too, was sound asleep and "dead to the world." Being assured that they were asleep The Swell and I went along the shaded side of the stable. The drugged man's pockets were felt for the key of the stable, but were not to be found. The other watcher had the keys. What was to be done?

"Knock his brains out," suggested Sunny Sam.

The Swell trembled. Fattie did not like it. If Sunny Sam and I had been alone that watcher might (mind you—might) have gone to his account. We all hesitated and looked at each other. What was to be done? The town clock struck two.

"Wrench the door off," The Swell suggested. I objected. If we did that, and the watcher woke up, Sunny Sam would brain him on the spot, and it might mean—well, anything.

Eventually, I suggested that Sunny Sam and I should deal with the sleepy temperance advocate! This was agreed to; the others to keep "nit." When Sunny Sam and I approached the sleeping one he was snoring, lovely. At a sign from me Sunny Sam pinioned his hands, while I stopped his mouth with a silken handkerchief well drenched with the drugged whisky. Sunny Sam twisted his hands behind his back and turned his face downward. Then Sunny Sam whispered hoarsely, "Hold your tongue and you're safe. Squeak, and your brains will be knocked out." To show what might be expected Sammy gave him a nasty knock near the ear, and would have repeated it if I had not stopped him. The pinioned and bleeding watcher moaned and piteously cried, "Take the blankety horse. Take the blankety key! It is in my pocket. Leave me my life."

"Will you describe us to-morrow to the coppers?" asked Sammy.

"No," came the reply. "I don't know you. I have never seen you."

We bound him, gagged him, and left him; then, taking the key, we unlocked the box, saddled up poor old Fly-the-Garter, and made off—Westward Ho.

On getting out of town, we conferred. We were in for it now. So I decided to show the silverish push

of Johannesburg's nicest society that I was still Bluey Grey.

I instructed Sunny Sam to re-dye the horse—black this time, and dye him so that the devil himself would not know him. I directed him to a "joint" who had a stable and yard and everything fitting. By sunrise the brands could be faked, the horse dyed black, and everything sweet. I knew he was clever and solid. Having made those arrangements, we lighted our pipes and finished the "joke."

A "head" from India had arrived three days before. He was motherless—broke—had four horses but no money to enter or back them with. I decided that he should enter this horse of our's, Fly-the-Garter, dyed black as his own, and ring the changes in on one that was in his stable, also a black, called India's King. He could register and nominate him the following day for the High Weight Handicap. His horses were four miles out in a cheap and nasty stable—unnoticed and unthought of. Before sunrise Fly-the-Garter must be in the box of India's King, and this horse, who was no good performer, taken out and planted. We must not be seen together, but at midnight to-morrow night we could meet in the same lonely place and arrange final details.

Dad must know nothing—until the death. Sunny Sam must get to work on the dyeing business before sunrise, and have it finished by 10 o'clock. The hub-bub over, the loss of Fly-the-Garter would be at its height.

So we parted. It was 4.30 when I sneaked up the servants' stairs to my room at the hotel.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—THE BLACK MOKE FROM INDIA. THE MONK'S CANTER.

OF course, there was a hubbub about the rescued horse. The injured man was interviewed by the Press, which had a lot to say about the matter. The authorities had nothing to say. The police made notes, but made no move to catch the offenders, beyond sending telegrams to the coast to watch for the departure of the "painted" one.

The event of the day's meeting would be the Trader's Plate, for which the Queen of Africa was a short-priced favourite. The gathering on the course was a record one. Big fields, big betting, and big results to someone were assured. I made application for admittance, and was promptly refused. Just what I wanted. I went to sleep.

After the races, Dad, who had been book-making, returned to the hotel stoney-broke.

"Talk about thieving," he said. "This race to-day was as strong as prussic acid. It was no race—"Queen of—of Hell!" was never in the hunt! They say she stumbled, lost her position, etc. Anyway, the public lost their boodle." I never laid a quid against her. I'm struck, Bluey. Struck heavily. £12,000 bad. Yes, don't stare, Bluey. What are we to do, Bluey? My bag is empty. Look! Settling is to-morrow. It's the only day in the year that half the people out here get up early—that is, the half that win. What's to be done, Bluey? You're our headpiece and mouth-piece. If I settle to-morrow, I'll get it all back next

day—that's the off day. I am sure to get round—the last day. I was bookmaking before lots of 'em was born."

"Not much," I said, drily. "An early train leaves to-morrow for Durban. Go to the Suburban Station, four miles from here, by my motor, board the train, and rest in Durban until I come down. Bookmaking is not your game."

"What, Bluey! Take the knock? Take the knock? Don't be cruel. You have tons of money. I can't take the knock, Bluey, at my age! Don't dog me along the hollow road, Bluey. I'm an old man. Square in for me like a good chap. I'll get my own back the last day," whimpered the old man.

"Not a shilling," I said, firmly.

Dad slunk off dejectedly, saying, "Oh, Kruger! Father Kruger! to whom the 'crooks' all pray! Why did you ever lose this country? I blame all my ill luck to old Kruger. Under Dutch rule, there is no knock—no knock! I wish I were dead. The devil would be kinder to me than Bluey Grey!"

That night I sent for Sunny Sam and Fattie. With The Swell we had a secret conference in my bedroom. My wife had taken my son to the circus. All was now fixed up for the morrow. The re-dyed horse, Fly-the-Garter, was entered and weighted nicely for to-morrow's races. His race was the last but one—the High Weight Handicap.

The morrow dawned hot and muggy. Electricity seemed to be in the air. The mob was tired, fagged, and out of temper—and pocket.

I strolled on the hotel balcony. As the mob passed, they looked up significantly and sneered, "You're in your place, old man—on the 'outer.'"

The trainer, Dopeton, saw me and smiled. Every-

one was sure I was out, and would stay out. So my plans were made easy. At about two o'clock I emerged from the hotel in the get-up, the real rig-out of one of the Trappist brothers, who wore long coats to the ground, long pointed beards, half clerical shape hats, and glasses or goggles, in obedience to their holy order. Thus equipped, with staff in hand, I set out for the racecourse. The ticket vendor tipped his hat to me. The man at the gate bowed me in. I passed on. The boys all knew me and whispered that "all was as sweet as a lolly."

This was the "India's King's" race—Fly-the-Garter re-dyed. The public had gone mad on one of trainer Dopeton's neddies. They had backed it, for a lot. India's King was out of the race, it was a sure thing for the favourite. The slightest mistake now would mean trouble, serious trouble. I viewed all the surroundings, the gates, and all other means of exit. I would not be caught like a rat in a trap, this time.

The horse looked well. He had been worked on the sandhills, away from the racing track. It seemed to do him good. He was now jet black, and bright and shining. Sam and Fattie acted as long and short "nits" (watchers).

The man from Sydney side did the saddling and fixing up the horse. An old bag sheet was thrown on him, and he was kept in his box until the last minute.

As the painted Fly-the-Garter was going out, a half-demented woman rushed into the Steward enclosure and started a fierce altercation with one of the officials. Her voice was loud, but not sweet. She caused quite a commotion. The stewards begged the good lady to go away. Fly-the-Garter being safely on his way to the post, and the steward's scrutiny stopped by the wild woman, she made her exit, her

work being completed. The horses were now nearing the post. The favourite who belonged to Dopeton was at 2's, and painted Fly-the-Garter was any price from 12's to 20's.

I dribbled on a few tenners. So did The Swell, Sunny Sam, and Fattie also put in good work, at getting the money on. They were real tradesmen at the work. We put on fully 500; still the pulse of the market was not touched. I was kicking myself for not having more money on me. The lady who had caused so much trouble when Fly-the-Garter was going out, took one bet—200 to 10.

The cunning trainer, Dopeton, was in the enclosure chatting to the toffs and stewards. He had now fully forgotten his battling days in the land of the kangaroo.

All eyes were on the starter. Some trouble was experienced at the post. Fattie whispered to me, "Am I to carry out your instructions when the horses return after the race to get weighed in?"

"Yes," I said, "on your life. Yes, no matter what the cost. Appear half drunk and act as I instructed you."

"They're off!" went up a big yell.

"Where's the favourite?"

"Nowhere," came the answer. "Another hot pot," said someone else.

"What's that in the lead?"

"That black moke from India. It will win too, they can't catch it."

"Look. It is increasing its lead."

"Why, the favourite's dead as cats' meat."

"The darned stewards will stand anything after this go. Where's Dopeton? Why, look at him chatting to the stewards, it's a swindle. Hoots! Hoots!"

The horses came along the straight with a terrific rattle. The jockey on India's King kidded to get close home by half a length. He won. Oh what a lovely hoot, what a yell! And how the public hooted Dopeton, the favourite trainer, whenever he showed his parchment-like face.

The horses now came into the enclosure to be weighed in and inspected by the stewards and by the mob on the outer. As the saddle was taken off Fly-the-Garter, Fattie, true to his instructions, jumped the picket fence of the enclosure and struck the Australian trainer, Dopeton, in one of his squinty optics, saying, "Take that, and that, you turf crook." Then he caught him in the jaw and floored him. Fattie next hit out at anyone who came to stop his slaughter. He fought and yelled like a maniac.

The police were called in, the crowd hooted and yelled, "Let the man up, you cowardly dog." Still Fattie fought, and swore, and kicked. He declared, in a voice of thunder, that he had been "rooked" by the Dopeton "head"—the race was a swindle—he had a family to keep—his starving children made him mad—and so on. The row he kicked up developed to a riot.

Dopeton made his exit to the lavatory to repair his optic and the crowd laughed—joked and jostled and chaffed, now and again hooting the favourite's owner by way of diversion. Fattie was of course arrested, but was admitted to bail.

In the midst of all the arranged trouble, Fly-the-Garter was weighed in and the flag hoisted. I put The Swell to watch the stewards in the enclosure, and the rest of us went a-collecting. I collected a good bit of my ready money. Sunny Sam had finished his section. We took the bookies by sections. I was

quite happy, when The Swell ran to me and whispered, "They have taken a tumble. The Dope-ton trainer is chatting with the stewards, and telling them that this row business at a race meeting is an old game in Australia. He's sure the black horse is a ring in—if the stewards would only inspect it, and the stewards have agreed to secure the horse after the race."

Sure enough, full precautions were taken.

All the gates were closed and locked. No horse was allowed to leave. We had now fully collected; so I gave most of the money to The Swell to take home, and then made for the horse's box.

"Saddle him up at once," I said to Sam, "Then follow me to your stable as quick as lightning. All the gates being shut and locked we are in a trap. so Sam, let your men get to work as I told you. The last race of the day is now on. Pull down that panel of the fence yonder at the back of the boxes. Yes, down with it."

They got to work on the picket fence. It gave way to their efforts. "That's grand, drag it out of the way. Give me a leg up."

I vaulted into the saddle. India's King— (Fly-the-Garter) gave a spring over the debris of the picket fence, and away at a full canter he went, with the trappist monk on his back, to his stables.

A few saw the exit, but none cared! All seemed engrossed with their invested interest in the next race, which was now starting, whilst the people and the stewards yelled higher and higher as their fancies were showing up. I did cut a guy in my monk's rig-out, flying along the street to the stable four miles away. I was soon there. The horses

changed, the real moke put back, and Fly-the-Garter went into hiding.

I gave the horse and the stake he won to the man who took a bit of risk over the race. The bags gave him £100 in cash. I discarded the trappist monk's rig-out; put my cap on, engaged a taxi-cab, went leisurely to the hotel, ate a good dinner, shared the spoils of the day with my pals, and was happy and contented. I was still Bluey Grey—yes, still "Bluey."

We collected, all told, £7,400. We fixed a "mouth-piece" up for Fattie over the row, but he got gaol. So I banked his cut out of the spoil, for him. I left next morning with my wife and my beloved son, for Durban. When I arrived I sent the following telegram to the Australian trainer at Johannesburg:—

"Next Time you Turn Policeman do it on Some Bloke Easier
to pinch than yours truly, BLUEY GREY."

We sailed for England in the Kinfairn Castle, and landed here four months ago to-day.

CHAPTER XXXVII.—GATHERING STORM.

"HAD Bluey made for England to continue his old game?" asked one of the sports as Mack knocked the ashes out of his pipe and put it in his pocket, as if about to depart.

"Don't think so, but can't say," said the ex-Thief Catcher. That's the very question I put to him when he had finished his yarn.

"And what did he say?" asked the same voice.

"He looked me straight in the eyes," said the retired policeman, "and in a choked voice said: 'No, Mack! No, Mack! I have turned the game up. I hate to think what I have been—not for my own sake, but for my son's—that boy's life—is awakening in me all the dormant passions of love—all the beautiful sentiments of loving and being loved. His life has gone into my heart and filled a void—a void which nothing could fill but love, my child's love.'"

"Nature has been kind and gentle with him," Bluey proceeded. "He is healthful, bonny, and witty. All his childish prattle strikes me on the tenderest chord of my heart. My God! If but the black past could be obliterated, and I had but a penniless start in life—with only that child as my mate, to love me and to be loved by me—I would not exchange that position for a kingdom. I never knew what love was until his arms were entwined about my neck whilst I listened to his prattle.

"Surely nature—or that Divinity which surrounds our being—treats some of her children very, very shabbily. Nature left the passion of love, and of reverence, dormant in me until my mad race was run. Then, in a splenetic mood, she awakens to her error, and hastily opens the gates of all joy in life

and of all hopes of hereafter, by giving me a child—the blood of my blood, the bone of my bone—to love.

“If love’s sweet and most sacred passion had not been sleeping within the deepest cells of my heart—thus allowing all the other passions of wrong’s kingdom to sway the body, and direct the heart and mind to action—what a different history might have been written about ‘Bluey Grey!’”

“Alas! alas!” said Bluey, as his thin white lips almost quivered, and his eyes moistened, “We are, at best, nature’s playthings—the sportive units for fortune’s tricks.”

“Bluey finished his coffee,” said Mack re-filling his pipe, and then, smiling through the glistening tears in his great eyes, said, “Tis said that only women cry—that’s another lie. I have cried tears of sorrow for my son’s sake. If crying would blot out the fearful past, and place my son on a rose-clad road to virtue and happiness, I would drown this land with tears. But tears of regret are useless. We can only curse our fate and go on—on to the last, and fill dishonourable graves, where the glow-worm banquets in the death-silent clay.”

For a few moments we stared at each other. Bluey was silent—his lips quivering, his eyes moist. His life in his son was weighing on his heart as no law of the State or authority of man could have done.

As we sat there—the night creeping on, the city lights glowing, the noise of traffic increasing without, the paper boys screeching the disasters and troubles of the day—one youth, more daring than his brothers, half opened the swinging doors of the swell restaurant with “Evening News, Sir, latest edition, just out—full of murders to-night.”

Bluey shivered, as though by instinct, as he mechanically took the paper, and threw the newsboy a tanner, saying,—“Murders only? Eh!”

“Oh, plenty of robberies,” said the youthful paper-vendor, “and an old fence pinched. I think he’s called Moses or Aaron.”

The door banged—the boy disappeared. So did the colour of Bluey’s cheeks.

Yes, there it was:—

IMPORTANT ARREST OF A NOTORIOUS FENCE.

KNOWN AS “FATHER ABRAHAM.”

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE IN HIS CELL.

Bluey threw the paper down—he seemed ill. Extending his hand he said, “I must be moving. Here’s my address. Come and see me, when and how you will. Good-bye.” Then after a pause he said, slowly and solemnly:—

The mills of God grind slowly,
They grind exceedingly fine.

“Again he pressed my hand, and was gone into the lighted street—to fight, perhaps, the coming storm, to elude authority and justice, or to still direct his battalions against Society and its law. Could he sustain the fight? Was he still ‘Bluey Grey,’ the great Uncaught Thief?

“No, no! With the birth of his son, another, a weaker ‘Bluey Grey’ was born—one with love, with the passion of love dominating or thwarting the other worse passions of his being.

“The grappling hooks of the law were firmly embedded in Father Abraham’s vitals. The Countess had become pious in the dark evening of her criminal life—a triumphant Mary Magdalen—but not so pious but that she was watching for her chance to destroy Bluey.

"Thus, two props sustaining Bluey were gone. Yet I would wager that Bluey, once he 'smelt powder,' would fight until the last—yes, until the death."

"Musing thus," the ex-Thief Catcher added, "I left the coffeehouse and strolled along Piccadilly Circus making for my hotel."

"Was that the last you saw or heard of Bluey?" asked the same voice from the corner.

Mack re-lighted his pipe, and said: "Well, I may as well stay and finish the story. One night, nearly six months after my meeting Bluey—I had almost forgotten him—an urgent wire was placed in my hands as I sat in a palatial hotel off the Strand, London, where I had just finished an extra special job. The telegram ran: "Come at once, very urgent. Waiting at station for you. Don't delay. Dad."

The message surprised me, and set me thinking.

"Ah!" I conjectured,—“Bluey's caught—perhaps in a trap. No! He has shot and killed someone—surely something is in the ill winds that 'sometimes blow upon the life of every criminal.'”

I telegraphed that I would come at once, and was soon in the train, rolling off in obedience to Dad's wish.

As the train drew into the station, I saw Dad's big, fat, red face, all a-glow, like the rising sun upon a hot Eastern day.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, opening the carriage door with a grin that almost cracked his face, "Ah! I'm so glad you've come. Let me take your bag. Oh, there's the devil to play at the Park, and no pitch hot!"

"Is Bluey taken?" I enquired.

"No, no! Not much."

"Has he killed anybody?"

"Oh! no!" said Dad. "He wouldn't kill a mouse. But it's awful! Come into the quiet parlour of the 'otel. I have the motor ready to run you out. Oh, sir! How 'e do ask for you. What a time I've 'ad with him! Lor', bless your heart, its killing me at my age. You see, Bluey is too 'ot, far too 'ot. He won't go slow. He wants to own the earth. I always did tell him there's good money to be made on the safety side of playing one, playing one solid game. But, no, 'e was Bluey Grey.

"Yes," I said, "but what's the matter?"

"Well," replied Dad, in his flurry and fluster, "let's 'ave a glass o' something—mine's whisky, what's your'n?—good!—Now, let's shut the door. Oh! 'ow my old 'ead do ache. You see I'm too old for the game of walking the tight-rope o'er the universe."

"Well, swallow your grog and tell me what's happened," I said, somewhat impatiently.

"'Appened," exclaimed Dad in disdain. "'Appened! Well everything that could 'appen with any sort of decency 'as 'appened."

"Let's have it, then," I snapped.

"Well," said Dad, steadying his face and resting a hand on each knee, as he gazed into the bright fire that sent a warm glow into the room, "you know Bluey bought The Park—that is, Lamberton Park with its picturesque and charming manor house. He bought it with the intention of turning square, and watch—to use his own words—to watch his son grow. Well it's a beautiful place, in a swell neighbourhood, and all seemed to be going well and we were getting along splendidly—becoming nice and respectable.

"The 'good people,' as they say in the French,

called on Bluey's Missus, the parson was always coming and going, and the tradespeople all thought their fortunes were made after the rich man from America came to live at the Manor.

"Well, Bluey was not 'appy—'e seemed to commence to wither with the life, the quietness, the non-existent excitement seemed to pall on 'im. He rarely spoke to anyone but 'is son. He never smiled but when his son made 'im. He neglected his dress and tidy habits, and took his food irregular. The racking cough he caught in South Africa grew on 'im. He could 'ardly be civil to me. Pity only knows what I suffered from Bluey Grey. Thus, one week crawled into another, until nearly six months 'ad gone by. Then 'e gits a letter from that young wretch, Weary Willie, demanding money. He promptly burns it. I begged 'im to answer it—but no. Another week or two, when—oh! I shall never forget the storm—who should drive up but that accursed woman, The Countess, with Weary Willie to show 'er the way.

"Bluey and I was sitting in the big verandah. 'E was silent, the newspapers rested on a stool near 'im unopened—when the Countess drove up like a destroying angel, up the carriage way in a motor car.

"As she alighted, Bluey turned paler, if that were possible. His cough tackled 'im as The Countess stood in front of 'im like an accusing she-devil. Weary Willie kept at a safe distance—grinning.

"‘So,’ said the Countess, ‘I have at last met you, Bluey Grey, face to face, after your treachery in deserting me.’”

Bluey's deadly eyes gave one sparkle. I thought the old life and vigour was coming to its senses. Then he reclined back in his easy chair, merely ejaculat-

ing, "Well, now you've caught me—well?"

"Well," she yelled, "well, I am now the instrument of the Lord. I am here to denounce you and all your perfidious works, too, if needs be, to hand you over to the police."

Willie stopped grinning.

"You 'ave deserted me," she went on, "like you deserted and murdered that poor helpless orphan girl, Jeanette."

Poor Bluey! He placed his fingers on his eyes, if possible, to shut out the word "Jeanette." But he did not utter one word.

At the word "Jeanette," Bluey's Missus comes on the scene. She had been a-dressing up Bluey's youngster and making ready for a motor drive.

"Oh! oh!" the Countess fairly screeched. "This is your wife—an honest woman living with a thief, a murderer."

"A thief—a murderer?" echoed Bluey's wife, almost in a whisper. "A thief? Who Madame are you, and what is your business here? My husband is ill—please moderate your conduct."

The Countess gave a harsh, cruel laugh, and said, "Fool, fool, will you chide me, God's instrument, and shield that thief, that murderer, that man who first seduced Jeanette?"

At the word "Jeanette," Bluey's wife gave a start, and then, turning to Bluey, said, "Duncan, Duncan, who is this woman? What does she want here? Speak to me, my husband. Why does she mention Jeanette—my poor Jeanette? Oh, speak, speak, if only for your son's sake!"

The mother and child clung to poor Bluey, and the child patted his hand, saying—"Send that woman away, dada."

Bluey at last aroused himself, rose slowly, and, steadily gazing at the Countess with all the fire his once basilisk eye could command, exclaimed, "Madam, all you say is false. You are mad—yes, mad—leave this place at once."

"Thank God!" murmured Bluey's poor wife.

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed the Countess, with loud mocking laugh. "False, is it? False?" then tearing open her blouse, she brought forth a card, upon which, written in Bluey's hand, was the following, as described in Chapter XXV.:—

New York.

My beloved, I am shocked and pained beyond expression. Cheer up! Be brave! Say nothing! Be sure in your darkest danger, my love, my life, my all is at your disposal.

BLUEY GREY TO THE COUNTESS.

Having handed the card to Bluey's Missus, the Countess laughed and said, "Ask him if that is not his handwriting, and if he did not send that card to me whilst I was in the Tombs at New York. Ask him if he is not the notorious thief, known as 'Bluey Grey.' Ask him if he has not been false to God, false to man, and false to you—his wife? And is he not now false to that child, living as he lives now, a living lie."

"Bluey took his wife's pale, tear-wet face in his hands. He drew her to him—he kissed her—hesitated

a moment—then said firmly, "Yes ; I am Bluey Grey."

His wife gave a shudder.

Bluey continued—"Marjorie, I never loved you until this moment. My life has been a living lie. I am Bluey Grey, the Uncaught Thief, but I love only——

The last words were drowned in his wife's screech.

"She re-coiled from him as a good, innocent woman would recoil from a reptile. She frantically clutched her child and left the room, sobbing as though her heart would break.

"Poor Bluey fell back into his chair. He had trusted to her love for him, but had reckoned without counting his wife's virtue, her honesty, and her trust in God.

His white lips now quivered, his eyes closed—he had fainted under the fatal blow.

The Countess laughed the hollow, mocking laugh of triumph. She had, in her madness, destroyed two lives—broken two hearts.

We carried Bluey to bed. He was hot—feverish—and at times delirious—calling for his son and his wife. Then he would mention Jeanette, "Jeanette, you know I love you."

"So," Dad added, tremulously, "I wired for you—his friend. I did not like being in the place alone, as these tragic happenings get on to my old nerves."

"And his wife?" I asked.

"Oh, Lor'," said Dad, "she's gone. Yes—she's gone, and taken her son with her. The last I saw of her was, when I saw her sitting near the fire with her child by her side, weeping and saying,—“So he is a thief, a thief—the Uncaught Thief, Bluey Grey.”"

"And the Countess?" I asked.

"She drove off like a lunatic, screeching that she

was the handmaid of the Lord. Ah! me. I told Bluey to beware of her. I warned him long ago. She carries ruin about with her, the same way as other women carry their paint and puff bags. I don't know where she'll go when she dies," whimpered Dad. "The devil won't have her if he's the sensible chap we read about, and St. Peter will rule her off in the ledger of life. She'll be warned off, both ways."

"Well," I said, "let's go and shake Bluey up. We may save him for a useful life, yet. The gates of hope and forgiveness are never shut against the sorest heart or saddest sinner. Come along, we'll try to save him."

Dad rose slowly—stared me full in the face, hesitated, and said, "Well, now look here, Governor. If we do save him, it will only be on condition that he'll cut me out of his future jokes. I'm too old to stand up to it any longer. Nothing suits Bluey better than an earthquake, a tidal wave, or a whirlwind, punctuated with a shipwreck or two weekly. It's too 'ot, too 'ot. He must cut me out. Still, come along, we must try and save him—if only for the church."

"Lor'," continued Dad, with a broad grin on his big fat face, "what would have become of the Church if Bluey had been a parson? He would not have allowed any but one-armed men to take the plate round. He would have issued promissory notes payable on St. Peter in the next world in such numbers that their due dates would have sent St. Peter balmy."

Thus the kind-hearted old Dad joked on until his fat sides became knotted, laughing at his own jokes.

At last we arrived at the Park and entered the old manor house. The place was deserted.

Bluey's child's toys were lying about in all directions—everything was in disorder.

The old nurse said that the doctor was with Mr. St. Clair—told us to be seated, and we could see him presently.

At last the doctor came from his room. He called old Dad and whispered instructions, drew his gloves on, wished us "Good-day!" and was gone.

We entered Bluey's room. What a change! Poor chap! I was deeply moved when I saw his emaciated face and shrunken form upon the bed—face pallid—his eyes sunk.

He half smiled, extended his hand to me—then it fell of its own weight by the bedside.

He wearily motioned to me. "I am weary. Where, where is my son?" he whispered.

I shook my head.

"Gone? Eh—gone?" he asked.

"Yes, Bluey," I said. "You must bear up. Your son's gone."

"Ah, well, well"—he shook his head and half turned his face to the wall. His hand caught the counterpane with a convulsive grasp. His lips tightened—he was, poor fellow, making some supreme effort.

The tears were streaming down his cheeks. His eyes seemed to sink back—back, far into their sockets. Death was surely grappling with that once untamable soul.

"Bluey," I said, "shall I bring the parson?"

He half smiled—half shook his head—his eyes motioned me to him. In a smothered whisper, punctuated with pauses, he said:—

*I have lived my life,
I have done my best,
I'll go where most men go.*

After that he seemed satisfied—he smiled gently—his head fell on one side.

Was he dead?

Dad and I stared vacantly at each other. The old man's face was flushed, big tears were in his eyes. He drew from his pocket a huge snuff handkerchief, and wiped the tears from his eyes, and great beads of perspiration were oozing from his forehead.

We both looked at Bluey. I raised his hand and straightened his head on the pillow. He gave one glassy glare at me, then muttered, "Jeanette, Jeanette."

For a moment all was still. Then a great convulsion seemed to take charge of Bluey's frame. He half rose in the bed—stared like one stark mad—and called, in a voice that one might hear with trembling horror in a hollow vaulted sepulchre, "Stop, stop! He's my son! Stop, stop! I'll tell you all! I'll tell you where the jewels are planted! Stop, stop! My son, my——"

He fell back, with one long sob.

Bluey Grey was dead!

Poor Bluey! He entered the world with a sigh, and left it with a sob.

Yes! Bluey was dead.

"Let us bury with him all his faults and failings," said Mack, rising and making for the door, "and think only what that master mind might have been had chance crowned him in any other walk in life save that of a professional thief. Yes, let him rest."

And as Mack uttered the last word a bright-eyed youth at the extreme end of the room, who had listened intently to the narrative, said, with a smothered sob:

"REST! REST! PERTURBED SPIRIT."

FINIS.

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